Beyond the Closet:
LGBT and Queer Archiving in the United States

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Eric Joseph Colleary

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Dr. Margaret Werry
Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance
Adviser

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Dedication

To Charles Nolte

"[I] did satisfy myself mighty fair in the truth of the saying that the world do not grow old at all, but is in as good condition in all respects as ever it was."

- Samuel Pepys
February 3, 1667

Abstract

This dissertation explores the ways sexual identity and culture are produced, imagined, performed, shaped, re-shaped, and deconstructed in LGBT archives in the United States. While a great deal of research has been conducted within the past two decades on LGBT historiography, there has been a dearth of studies examining the archival sites from which histories of LGBT identity are being written. This dissertation reveals that the construction of non-heterosexual sexual identities has been a conscious, careful process – borrowing from established historiographic, feminist, and colonial and postcolonial theories to establish archives of LGBT history and culture counter and in relation to dominant heteronormative narratives. There are times, however, when every archive fails to capture the complexity and diversity of LGBT experience. Rather than see these moments as failures, I "read" them as queer opportunities to rethink and reposition identities which may have become politically and socially stagnant. In each chapter, I focus on a particular archive and a specific individual (an archivist or a collector) who helped make it. The first chapter explores W. Dorr Legg's efforts in the 1950s to establish the discipline of homophile studies through the ONE Institute in Los Angeles as a way of creating a historical and archivable past for a collective homosexual minority that was just beginning to take shape. Chapter Two focuses on the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn and Joan Nestle's radical reimagining of what an archive could be through the lens of 1970s lesbian separatist feminism. Chapter Three looks at the acquisition and organization methods of Jean Tretter of the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies at the University of Minnesota as a way of describing the queer possibilities of encountering the unexpected in an archive. The fourth and final chapter theorizes what a queer archive might look like, grounding this theorization in the collection of 1960s performance artist Jack Smith, which has recently been acquired by the Gladstone Gallery in New York.

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Introduction

Reading the Archive

> "Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past." (394).
>
> - Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"

On June 30, 1986, the Supreme Court of the United States upheld the right of states to criminalize sodomy in the landmark decision *Bowers v. Hardwick*. Michael Hardwick had been observed by a police officer engaging in a consensual act of homosexual sodomy with another adult in the bedroom of his Atlanta home. Justice Byron White argued in the majority decision that the Court can only protect rights not easily identified in the Constitution only when those rights are "implicit in the concept of ordered liberty" or when they are "deeply rooted in the Nation's history and tradition." Noting that thirteen colonies had laws against sodomy at the time of the ratification of the Bill of Rights – some dating back as far as 1667 – and that many states had outlawed sodomy since, Justice White concluded that American society had historically condemned homosexual acts broadly defined under the term sodomy. In his concurring statement, Justice Warren Burger reaffirmed the importance of history in the court's decision arguing that "proscriptions against sodomy have very ancient roots." Justice Burger cited William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* and Derrick Sherwin Bailey's *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, noting that Roman law under the Emperor Justinian criminalized sodomy, and Henry VIII passed similar laws after the Reformation that later became the basis for anti-sodomy laws in the

American colonies. Given such overwhelming historical evidence, Burger concluded that "to hold that the act of homosexual sodomy is somehow protected as a fundamental right would be to cast aside millennia of moral teaching."

On June 26, 2003, the Supreme Court overturned their ruling in *Bowers v. Hardwick* with *Lawrence v. Texas*. Writing the majority opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy states outright that "the historical grounds relied upon in *Bowers* are more complex than the majority opinion and the concurring opinion by Chief Justice Burger indicate. Their historical premises are not without doubt and, at the very least, are overstated." Citing a litany of GLBT histories published since the 1986 case – such as Jonathan Ned Katz's *The Invention of Heterosexuality* and John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman's *Intimate Matters* – Justice Kennedy noted that early sodomy laws also limited sexual acts between men and women, and that since homosexuality as a separate identity did not emerge until the late 19th century, the Court could not claim that anti-homosexual morality had "ancient roots." In fact, a review of national laws found that it wasn't until the 1970s that states began passing legislation directly targeting same-sex relations for criminal prosecution. Kennedy condemned Burger's sweeping references to the history of Western civilization, suggesting that Burger willfully ignored historical evidence pointing an opposite direction. Ultimately the Court concluded that consenting adults had a "right to engage in their conduct without intervention of the government," and that "history and tradition are the starting point but not in all cases the ending point of the substantive due process inquiry."

The centrality of history in deciding two of the Supreme Court's most significant cases dealing with homosexuality underscores the extent to which history has had a role in LGBT politics.[1] That the justices could read the same historical evidence in support of two opposing arguments also demonstrated to gay and lesbian communities the importance of taking control of the historical narratives that described them. In *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture and Difference*, Scott Bravmann notes that

> the importance of history to gay men and lesbians goes beyond the lessons to be learned from the events of the past to include the meanings generated through retellings of those events and the agency those meanings carry to the present (4).

History is never *just* a retelling of the past. Histories offer myths and meanings that actively define identities in the present, as seen in the Supreme Court rulings, or in the appropriation of the pink and black triangles of the Holocaust in LGBT political movements, or in the annual re-staging of the Stonewall Riot rallies commemorated by Pride parades and festivals around the world. And to understand these histories – how they are written, how they shape LGBT identity – one can look to the archive.

This dissertation explores the ways sexual identity and culture are produced, imagined, performed, shaped, re-shaped, and deconstructed in LGBT archives in the United States. While a great deal of research has been conducted within the past two decades on LGBT historiography, there has been a dearth of studies examining the archival sites from which histories of LGBT identity are being written. What this dissertation reveals is that the construction of non-heterosexual sexual identities has been

[1] Throughout this dissertation, I refer to the collective Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender movement by its acronym, LGBT. In some cases, the acronym is listed in a different order, as in proper titles such as the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies.

a conscious, careful process – borrowing from established historiographic, feminist, and colonial and postcolonial theories to establish archives of LGBT history and culture counter and in relation to dominant heteronormative narratives. There are times, however, when every archive fails to capture the complexity and diversity of LGBT experience. Rather than see these moments as failures, I "read" them as queer opportunities to rethink and reposition identities which may have become politically and socially stagnant.

In each chapter, I focus on a particular archive and a specific individual (an archivist or a collector) who helped make it. The first chapter explores W. Dorr Legg's efforts in the 1950s to establish the discipline of homophile studies through the ONE Institute in Los Angeles as a way of creating a historical and archivable past for a collective homosexual minority that was just beginning to take shape. Chapter Two focuses on the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn and Joan Nestle's radical reimagining of what an archive could be through the lens of 1970s lesbian separatist feminism. Chapter Three looks at the acquisition and organization methods of Jean Tretter of the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies at the University of Minnesota as a way of describing the queer possibilities of encountering the unexpected in an archive. The fourth and final chapter theorizes what a queer archive might look like, grounding this theorization in the collection of 1960s performance artist Jack Smith recently acquired by the Gladstone Gallery in New York.

Reading across modern, postmodern, feminist, phenomenological, postcolonial, post-structural, and performance studies, this dissertation is the first detailed study of the intersections of LGBT historiography, archiving and queer theory. Some of the archives

have been treated historically in academic texts, such as Todd White's history of the ONE Institute within the context of the emerging homophile movement in *Pre-Gay L.A.*, or the reading of trauma in the holdings of the Lesbian Herstory Archives as in Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings*. Yet none have traced the discursive formation of sexual identity through the daily practices and material holdings of the LGBT archival collections, and it is in this that I hope this project contributes to these fields.

In a community that often does not pass down its sense of identity, its history, or its shared sense of belonging genealogically from parent to child, and a dearth of information about LGBT identity/community/history taught in schools, the archive assumes a unique role in producing historical legacies for future generations. Given this, how these histories come to be archived, by who and for what purpose, often speaks more to contemporary understandings of identity, value, and desire than the "authentic" pasts the archived objects claim to represent.

Since the 1950s in the United States, with the founding of the ONE Institute for Homophile Studies in Los Angeles, gay and lesbian archives have played a central role in defining the homosexual as a historical subject. The early compulsion to archive materials relating to homosexuality was twofold: to understand one's own homosexuality as a cultural expression, rather than a medical condition; and to, in their words, reveal narratives of homosexuality that had been suppressed within the major academic disciplines. In the wake of the Stonewall Riots in 1969 and the birth of radical gay and lesbian political movements, hundreds of grassroots archives opened in homes, offices, and community centers across the country, in cities big and small; the GLBT Historical

Society in San Francisco, the Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of GLBT History in Houston, the Leather Archives in Chicago, the Tennessee Lesbian Archives in Luttrell, the Black Gay Archives in Philadelphia, and the Sexual Minorities Archives in Northampton, MA – just to name a few, some of which are now defunct. These archives provided a historical context for contemporary movements, and documented the achievements and failures being made in the present. Archival collections often included newsletters and fliers of local organizations, local and national newsmagazines, meeting minutes from political groups, and book collections of non-fiction, fiction, and pulp novels that included homosexual themes. They also relied heavily on personal collections, frequently appealing to members of their community for photographs, journals, love letters, newspaper clippings, mementos, and – where material evidence was scarce – took the initiative to develop some of the earliest oral history projects geared towards the gay and lesbian communities. The primary audiences for these early archives were gay and lesbian individuals, who would visit or volunteer to learn more about the culture they were "coming out" into, emphasizing the importance of the archive to the development and expression of the gay and lesbian community over the desire for recognition from the academy or society at large. 1970s lesbian and gay activists celebrated their outsider status in society, and hoped that their lack of conformity would help bring about positive change for society-at-large.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a conservative backlash during the Reagan and Bush years – the failure of *Bowers vs. Hardwick* coupled with the crippling plague that is HIV/AIDS. The government's failed response to the AIDS crisis forced the gay

community to develop their own privately-funded health care services, aided by the lesbian community who had a history of developing women's clinics as early as the 1960s. Activists who were once invested in changing the political system now found themselves literally fighting for survival and recognition. Others were simply exhausted from the decades of fighting, only to see their achievements stripped away by the new conservative government. Many archives closed during this time, as archivists and volunteers disappeared from illness, fatigue, or other more pressing volunteer commitments. As the community's identity changed, the archives struggled to adapt. Gay and lesbian communities were beginning to work together, and by the late 90s, the inclusion of bisexual and transgender individuals and causes formed a singular vision of an LGBT community.

During this same time period, colleges and universities in the United States were establishing programs in women's, gender, African American, Asian American, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, sexuality and LGBT studies. The inclusion of LGBT and sexuality studies programs brought what was once marginalized research into the mainstream. Some of these programs – such as those at California State University, Northridge, or the University of Minnesota – acquired the contents of grassroots community-based archives to seed their own institutional collections. The growth of institutional LGBT archives has meant more research and publications in LGBT history. There is a perception the material is safer in such institutions, whereas grassroots archives have a tendency to disappear unexpectedly or are poorly cared for by untrained volunteers. However this shift has also taken many of these materials out of the

communities they represent. The archive can be an exclusive institution, unwelcoming to the uninitiated or the uncredentialed, and who has access to LGBT material can dictate the narratives that produce LGBT identity. The acquisition of grassroots archives by universities and colleges often forces remarkably idiosyncratic collections to conform to the protocols of academic institutions, and as I explore in this dissertation, the tensions between the two radically different approaches can lead to productive questions about identity, research, and archiving.

Never before in U.S. history has LGBT rights taken a more central focus in the political and social spheres, but never before has the non-conformity, idiosyncrasy, and even radical alterity represented by these collections been of more value. The rhetoric surrounding issues like marriage equality, the recent repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," same-sex adoption, or blood donation discrimination focuses on the restrictions which prevent LGBT citizens from participating in or benefiting from government-sanctioned institutions and programs. Such rhetoric actually acts to subvert any radical action within the LGBT community because the focus of equality is limited to how an individual achieves recognition from the state, rather than how the state can change to better meet the needs of a diverse population. LGBT 'equality' can be seen as a neoliberal maneuver towards assimilation. In light of this, there has never been a more important time to examine the ways LGBT identity is constructed and assimilated into larger systems of power and to find alternative ways of engaging in them.

I approach this project as a historian of performance and gay and lesbian culture. I use archives as a regular part of my scholarly practice, and my archival sensibility is

derived from my training and interest in performance. It is the performative nature of the archive which drives this engagement with the archive – the living encounter of archival materials and spaces, the life and performance of objects, the palpable relationship between objects and people, people's lives archived as objects, the interactions between archivists, library staff and visitors. All of this has helped me realize the ways in which the archive is not a fixed, objective institution as it is frequently seen, but as a wondering/wandering, fluid, affective subject fueled by a range of desires (longing, lust, fear, hope, etc.).

My first visit to an LGBT archive was near the beginning of my graduate career – I was preparing a syllabus for a class on the representations of homosexuality on the American stage, and in conducting research on Lorraine Hansberry's play *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*, I learned the playwright had written several anonymous Letters to the Editor to the early lesbian magazine *The Ladder* in 1957. The library catalogue mentioned that the Tretter Collection for GLBT Studies on campus had a near full-run of *The Ladder* in its collection, though the website for the archive only listed less than ten finding aids. I made my way across campus to the special collections library where I met Jean Tretter for the first time. He seemed surprised to see me, as he sat behind his computer checking emails. While very friendly and welcoming, he informed me that usually people contacted him first when they wanted to look at something so that he could have time to go down into the archive's caverns and retrieve it. I remember apologizing, humbled by my assumption that an archive worked like a regular library and that I could just walk in and find what I was looking for and take a peek at what else the

collection might hold. Mentioning the brevity of the archive's website, I asked Tretter what else was in the collection and how could I find it. "Oh we have lots of things," he replied. "We have some finding aids, but mainly if you have something you're looking for, just ask and I can try to find materials that relate." He left to retrieve the issues of *The Ladder* I needed, and left me in the reading room. For months, I kept imagining this unknown trove of LGBT materials and yearned to get down there to see it myself. It was 2008 then, and the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots was coming up the following year. I returned to Tretter's office and proposed a gallery exhibit commemorating LGBT activism in the United States, centering around this momentous event in LGBT history. I remain incredibly grateful to Jean for his enthusiasm at the idea, and I became a volunteer and eventually a paid staff member of the collection. It is through this work that I became fascinated with the archive itself, and progressively I found that when I visited an archive to conduct research, I began paying more and more attention to the archive itself; what did it have? How did it describe itself and its scope? How did this description impact what the archive collected and how they organized the collection?

This is not a comprehensive history of LGBT archiving in the United States, or even a representative sample of the hundreds of archives that have existed over the past seventy years. Every archive has a different approach to its work that reflects the knowledge, experience, resources and desires of those who organize them. Each has a unique perspective on LGBT identity, what that means, and what kind of research can and should be done with their collections, and as such, each archive has helped to shape LGBT identity in remarkably different ways. The ONE Institute and Archive was one of

first institutions in the country to conceptualize a discipline of study around same-sex sexuality, a precursor to contemporary LGBT studies, and thus set the discursive limits on how sexual identity would be talked about for decades to come. The Lesbian Herstory Archives established themselves in opposition to patriarchal systems of archiving that ONE and other Rankean-style institutional archives espoused, and is unique not only for its longevity, but for its continued commitment to its founding radical feminist principles. Where the ONE established itself as a formal, academic, institutional archive and the LHA marked itself as a grassroots, community-based archive, the Tretter Collection has been both, and the ability to read this shift from grassroots to institutional archive highlights important questions about contemporary LGBT identity and the queer possibilities of thinking otherwise. Having the advantage of working at the Tretter Collection as an archivist, scholar and community volunteer, I have the added advantage of being able to discuss the frequently invisible operations of an archive from an insider's perspective. The Jack Smith Archive is housed in an art gallery, which by its own admission does not know how to manage an archival collection and is not set up for it. Their crisis of managing the collection, which has led to it being separated into items of artistic and academic value, along with Smith's lifelong commitment to art that disrupts and makes audiences uncomfortable, makes this collection a particularly useful site to theorize queer archiving.

Archiving in America

The basic model of the archive in the United States can be traced back to the emergence of historicism in the early nineteenth-century. Western Europe was experiencing something akin to the recent "Arab Spring" uprisings in the Middle East. The July Revolution in France occurred in 1830, followed quickly by the Polish rebellion against Russia, and Belgium's declaration of independence from Holland. Civil war erupted in Spain and Portugal, and similar stirrings were felt in Germany and northern Italy. European historians sought a way of writing and understanding history objectively – without prejudice or political motivation - with the same sense of authority and verifiable accuracy as the sciences (Eskildsen 425). Among these historians was Leopold von Ranke, who sought to make history a verifiable science. Ranke recognized that the data of history was not the same as science – that history included variables of intention, desire and free will. A historical science would require a different methodological approach to what he saw as concrete historical phenomena. The job of the historian, Ranke argued, was to create a trustworthy reconstruction of the past, using objects (primarily documents) as data/evidence (Iggers 18). The documents were separated into a hierarchy of legitimacy, based on their proximity to the event being described. The closer the document to the event and the more reliable and proximate the document's creator, then the more valuable it was for Ranke's historicism.[2] The primacy of the document gave history the legitimacy of science by endowing it with the faith it would accurately reflect the past, and the archive – which would house and order these important documents – would become the historian's all-important laboratory.

[2] See Ranke 1973; Eskildsen 2008; Iggers 2008, 122-123; Krieger 1977; and White 1973, 163-190.

Ranke's philosophy – to see history "how it actually was" – became the bedrock of American historicism, which Peter Novick charts in his detailed study *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. Ranke's theories were particularly interesting to American historians who were struggling to establish their field as a legitimate profession (61). Novick argues that World War I brought about a crisis of confidence in the Rankean ideal when historians confronted the challenge of analyzing secret documents, and some within their profession – on both sides of the war – were clearly writing histories that were heavily influenced by their own nationality and political views. For example, a debate between two noted historians – Bernadotte Schmitt and Sidney Fay – over the origins of WWI yielded remarkably different interpretations, even though both scholars drew from the same archival source materials (224). The archive, they feared, could not be entirely objective. American historians Carl Becker and Charles Beard advocated a relativist approach to history, over Rankean objectivism. Relativism required a level of introspective reflection from the historian in order to situate themselves within the relative position of a "their time, place, values and purposes" (166). However, when Beard presented this position in the journal *Social Science Research Council Bulletin* shortly after WWII, most historians scoffed at the idea. The end of WWII and the new Cold War had brought about a level of self-confidence and hubris that saw value and power in history. A strong sense of patriotism and nationhood depended on a positive historical vision of America as a nation that had always acted on the side of liberty, freedom, and justice. Samuel Flagg Bemis, the president of the American Historical Association, addressed this in his 1962 speech at the

national conference, stating that "a great people's culture… begins to decay when it commences to examine itself…. In self-study and self-indulgence we have been losing sight of our national purpose" (307). To question America's place in history was unpatriotic, and in the age of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee, this could be considered tantamount to treason. It was in this context that the homophile movement emerged, as I detail in chapter one, and the archive and theorization of history adopted by the ONE Institute reflected Ranke's objectivist approach.

The Archival Turn

Despite Bemis' warning, the late 1960s brought about a shift in the humanities known as the "archival turn." This shift sought to understand the impact of the archive on the formation of knowledge – how it orders our thinking and defines the limits of identity. Leading the charge was French theorist Michel Foucault, whose 1969 study, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, investigated the limits of discourse and its circulation in Western society. For Foucault, knowledge consists of series of statements that act as rules, setting the limits of what can be thought. As soon as an event occurs, statements are made which seek to stabilize the way that particular event will be interpreted. The archive, then, is an *institution* which houses and orders these statements, and, since the statement acts as a rule, the archive also functions as the *law* of what can be said (10). The function of the archive, as both institution and law, is to blur the space between the event and its statement. It is an illusion, Foucault wrote, to think the archive protects and

preserves these statements for the future. The work of the archive is actually destructive in its ordering and 'preservation,' defining at the outset the event's "system of enunciability" (129). Foucault's treatise on the power of statements and their relation to the archive begs us to reflect on the ways archives simultaneously construct knowledge while also setting the limits on what can be thought.

Foucault applied this theorization of the archive to his critique of the histories of sexuality emerging in the early 1970s. Many of the early historians of homosexuality – W. Dorr Legg at the ONE Institute, or Jonathan Ned Katz whose *Gay American History* was among the first to reproduce an extensive collection of primary source material relating to male and female homosexuality from American history – found a troubling silence within the archive, an active exclusion of homosexual narratives. Where Legg and Katz focused on the difficulty of writing histories when encountering silence from the archive, Michel Foucault argued that the silences themselves can speak volumes about sexual attitudes and practices. In his 1976 study *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argued that there is not a silence about sexuality at all – since at least the seventeenth century, people have not been able to stop talking about sex (or can't help but talk about not talking about sex). He described the aim of his study:

> …to examine the case of a society which has been loudly castigating itself for its hypocrisy for more than a century, which speaks verbosely of its own silence, takes great pains to relate in detail the things it does not say, denounces the powers it exercises, and promises to liberate itself from the very laws that have made it function. (8)

To do this, Foucault read through materials in the archive that were not overtly about sexuality, or identified as such by the archivist. He examined everything from legal and medical discourse to the arrangements of hospitals, boarding schools, prisons and other institutions to show how the underlying awareness of sexuality influenced these organizations. The silence of the archive was not a censorship of sex. Rather, Foucault described the establishment of a number of apparatuses that produce "an ever greater quantity of discourse about sex" (23).

In the context of the period in which Foucault was writing, *The History of Sexuality* is remarkable in the way he challenges contemporary perceptions of the field. When the English translation was released in 1977 – eight years after the Stonewall Riots – Foucault's essay directly addressed the impulse of gay and lesbian activists to claim historical oppression as a motivation for their work. "Something that smacks of revolt, of promised freedom, of the coming age of a different law, slips easily into this discourse on sexual oppression" (7). Foucault argued that this *encourages* the historian to only speak of sex in terms of its repression, which gives it a certain market value by placing itself at the cusp of transgression and liberation. I argue that this extends to the LGBT archive, which replicates these narratives. However, Foucault was unable to argue that sex is not repressed – as "it not only runs counter to a well-accepted argument, it goes against the whole economy and all the discursive 'interests' that underlie this argument" – and so instead turned his attention to the ways in which the perception of repressed sexuality came into being (8). In doing this, Foucault offered a complex, multi-faceted history of sexuality spanning three centuries. He dealt with sexuality as it is constructed and

circulated through discourse rather than recounting the personal lives of particular individuals who lived during the period, which was (and to a degree, remains) en vogue in the field of LGBT historiography.[3]

In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida joined Foucault in recognizing the archive as a house of authority. Tracing the etymology of the word archive to its root *arkhe*, Derrida notes that the name refers both to the concepts of *commencement* and *commandment*, combining both into our perception of the archive. The archive is the place where things commence – physically, historically, and ontologically – where we recognize them for the first time. It is also the place "where men and gods command, there where authority, social order are exercised," which follows Foucault's understanding of the archive as the limitation and the law of what can be thought. (1) Carolyn Steedman's analysis of Derrida's lecture in *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* is particularly helpful for noting the discrepancies between the French-language version that Derrida wrote and its English translation. Archive fever, as Steedman points out, has less to do with archiving than it has to do with finding origin points and reclaiming memory – she rightly notes that Derrida only directly treats the archive in the first few pages before abandoning it to a detailed analysis of Josef Yerushalmi's reading of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*. The fever of the archive, then, is the desire to find, or locate, or possess moments of origins as the beginning of things. As I argue in the first chapter, the drive to establish LGBT archives began as a search for origins – but not necessarily in the same way as other non-

[3] Histories recounting the personal lives of particular individuals in an effort to portray a general history include such volumes as Bernstein (2006), Bullough (2002), Jay (1977) and Nardi (1994). The first major history to be published regarding the Stonewall riots of 1969 was Martin Duberman's *Stonewall* in 1993, which recounts the event through the eyes of six specific 'characters' who were there and whose story is meant to represent the thousands who participated.

LGBT archives. The goal was to find homosexuality in existing histories, and therefore, the quest for origins in LGBT archives was a quest to locate the origin of homosexuality in as far distant of a past as possible – or, even better, to be unable to locate an origin point at all (thus supporting the archive's argument that homosexuality is as old as humanity).

Queer Theory and Archiving

Queer theory has its roots in the post-structural debates that led to the archival turn and influences this study of archiving. If, as Foucualt and Derrida argue, the archive is one of the places where specific understandings of identity are affirmed, transmitted, and naturalized, 'queering' is an attempt to disrupt this process. In his essay "Queer Research; Or, How to Practice Invention to the Brink of Intelligibility," William Haver suggests that queer research is "characterized by the process of rendering intellectual life uncanny" and that it "does not make the world familiar or comfortable for the student or reader, but rather defamiliarizes or makes strange, queer or even cruel what we had thought to be a world" (291). Following the work of William Haver, José Muñoz, and others, to queer is to transform, a performative action that is simultaneously destructive and creative. I am using the term queer as a verb that directly challenges the identity of nouns. Even when used as an adjective or a noun, its transformative action is implied. It is an interruption in the status quo. Queer is an action against normalcy. It makes the familiar strange. Because it is the *act* of transformation, queer is an ongoing process, rather than the end result. This concept allows me to mark the critical difference between

LGBT archiving and queer archiving. Where LGBT archives seek to affirm and promote stable interpretations of sexual identity, queer archives attempt to break this notion of stability. Where an individual might go to an LGBT archive to seek answers, they would go to the queer archive to find questions. One, I argue, is not more important than the other, and as I work through the ways queer archives operate – sometimes even within established LGBT archives – I hope to demonstrate the ways engaging with these archives and concepts can be useful at various times and for various needs.

It is important to understand that what I am doing in this dissertation is not "pure" queer research or queer theory. I am trying to make sense of concepts that could *lead to* queer research and an understanding of a queer archive. I am engaged in a process of stabilizing here, of looking at archives and pointing to specific processes, in an effort to show other possible ways of thinking about identity in the archive. The requirements of a doctorate in academia require such a gesture of stabilization. This project needs to make sense, and hopefully it does this. My aim must be to engage with bodies of knowledge and explain them, not disrupt them. Here, I can only gesture to queer performance and queer research with the hope that it might inspire queer *doings* elsewhere. Disruption is anathema to educational institutions, which operate through the disciplinization of various fields. Queer work is safely housed in cultural studies programs and sexuality studies departments where it can be contained, and *talked about* ad nauseum. There is a danger that queer research is used as a method for the reproduction of LGBT cultures, rather than an opportunity to interrupt the (re)production of culture altogether. For queer theory and queer archiving to "work," it has to be recognized as something separate from

LGBT and sexuality studies, for while it is engaged in questioning those disciplines, it cannot be relegated merely to the disruption of sexual identities. The disciplinization of these fields within the academy is what prevents holistic engagements with queer concepts in all areas of life.

Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* applies this logic to objects, suggesting that the identity of the object is not a given part of its existence in the world. It is through our relationship to the object, the gesture of knowing it that makes it seem familiar, and we become oriented in the world through this familiarity. Yet, there are times when objects resist familiarity, or when something we thought was familiar suddenly becomes strange. Imagine, for example, you are at home at night and your lights go off. Knowing where you are in the room, and remembering what furniture is around you, you are able to make your way to a candle and box of matches. But what if, after the lights go off, all the furniture in the room were rearranged, or you became turned around. In your state of confusion, you can assume very little. You exist in a state of flux, of uncertainty. Slowly you have to learn new ways of navigating the world around you. Using Ahmed's work, I argue that it is by allowing ourselves to literally become disoriented in the archive that we break out of the normalized formations of identity we get stuck in, and begin to think differently about our relation to the material world. This is a performative gesture, one that must be embodied and experienced in relation to other things – people, objects, documents, space, buildings, time.

This work also depends heavily on recent research in queer historiography, particularly the work of Judith Halberstam and Scott Bravmann. Halberstam literally

wrote the book on queer temporalities with *In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. Insisting that queer theory and cultural participation/production need not be relegated to academic institutions or traditional research practices, Halberstam offers a challenge to (and displacement of) the heteronormative emphasis of the youth/adult cultural binary that dominates discussions of subculture. Her work clearly aligns with that of Lee Edelman whose *No Future* criticizes the heteronormative social and political practices that are constantly asking publics to make sacrifices for the benefit of future, unborn generations, and which marginalize individuals who are not actively reproducing for the good of the state. Halberstam argues that "reproductive time and family time are, above all, heteronormative time/space constructs… [but] all kinds of people, especially in postmodernity, will and do opt to live outside of reproductive and familial time as well as on the edges of logics of labor and production" (10). The traditional archive depends on reproductive and familial conceptions of time and space, and thus, I argue, thinking of histories outside these logics allows one to begin to conceptualize the queer archive.

Scott Bravmann's *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture and Difference* similarly argues the problematic ways histories are socially constructed "through arbitrary regimes of the "normal" and the "natural," but suggests that there are ways of approaching history that reject the gravitational "pull" towards sameness in favor of an approach that "acknowledges multiple socially constituted differences among gay and lesbian subjects" (x). Drawing on queer, feminist and cultural theories, Bravmann traces the ways gay and lesbian identity formations have been constructed through the politics

and poetics of historical discourse – which he calls the queer fictions of the past. Bravmann's vision of a multitude of complementary and conflicting historical discourses all gesturing to similar identity formations has been a valuable way of thinking through the queer archive as a space of encountering the unexpected and overwhelming. Such a vision of the archive recognizes that it is not and cannot be a laboratory to test the "truths" of history, as historical relativists have argued since at least WWI, but rather a space where the ever-growing and ever-changing narratives we use to understand the world around us can circulate, and continue to affect those who engage with them.

The concept of queer archiving is a relatively recent one, though queer historiography has occasionally gestured toward the idea. A forthcoming issue of *Radical History Review* due out in the fall of 2014 will be one of the first major publications to treat the subject thoroughly. Though Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings* is not attempting to theorize a concept of a queer archive, she does address the queer possibilities of reimagining the archive – not necessarily as a location filled with documents (though she addresses these too, as I discuss in Chapter 2), but through the shared experiences of "insidious trauma" within lesbian communities. Cvetkovich analyzes a range of texts from psychoanalysis to literature to show how various lesbian authors articulate similar shared experiences, which itself becomes a mode of collective identification. If the textual expression of feelings can be seen as a public expression, then Cvetkovich argues that understanding them can reshape how politics achieves its aims.

My research into LGBT historiography and archiving also benefits from postcolonial literature on archives. As I discuss in chapters one and two, early gay and lesbian historians and archivists framed homosexual identity as a colonized culture. W. Dorr Legg at the ONE Institute used the rhetoric of colonialism to align homophilia with studies of Asian, African and Native American culture, while also using models of education deployed by the United States when it colonized the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century. Joan Nestle at the Lesbian Herstory Archives began her career as a professor largely teaching first generation immigrants from formerly colonized countries. The postcolonial literature she taught – particularly Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi – resonated with her personal experiences as a lesbian living in New York City, and provided her with a framework for understanding the relationship between history and cultural identity. Many of the underlying questions encountered by black historians in post-apartheid South Africa or historians of post-colonial India – sites where much of postcolonial literature on archiving have focused – were asking similar questions as early lesbian and gay historians and archivists.[4] What are our truths? What are our stories? How do we tell them? How do we share them within our communities? Is it important to share them with others? Should we mimic historiographic and archival methodologies that once excluded us as a way of fitting in to dominant culture? Or should we recognize/develop other methodologies? How do we acknowledge our oppression and the trauma our communities have experienced, while also emphasizing that there is more to

[4] See, for example, Antoinette Burton's *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (2006); Wendy Walter's *Archives of the Black Atlantic: Reading Between Literature and History* (2013); Richard Roque and Kim Wagner's *Engaging Colonial Knowledge: Reading European Archives in World History* (2011); and Garth Stevens' *Race, Memory and the Apartheid Archive: Towards a Transformative Psychosocial Praxis* (2013).

our histories than this? Like Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, which postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Spivak have drawn from, there is an effort to read into and across the archive's silences to ask whether or not the subaltern can speak.

The Performance of Identity in the Archive

My training as a performance scholar and practitioner have encouraged me to consider the archive not as a destination, but as a performative practice of social engagement – between archivists, objects, visitors, volunteers, artists, donors, passersby, and the ghosts of the past that Michel de Certeau suggests are conjured through the act of writing history. It is through these moments of encounter, these social experiences, that communities are made *and* the unexpected is encountered. When an LGBT individual visits such an archive, they encounter a wide range of material that may or may not resonate with them. In these moments, they perform their identity in relation to what that individual sees as reflective or not reflective of their experience. They situate themselves in relation to the archive's narrative of LGBT history and culture. The encounter with the unexpected may lead to serious questioning on the part of the visitor – why is this material here? Why does it not reflect my experience? Is there something I am missing in my life? Or does the archive not recognize me and my experience as part of the overall LGBT experience? These reactions to the archive are often shared with other visitors and with archives staff, depending on the context, in reading rooms, living rooms, kitchens, basements, and art galleries all across the country – wherever LGBT archival material finds a home. There are agreements and disagreements, affirmations and refusals, and in

this process of engagement, people position themselves relationally with one another, with the objects in the archive, and with the histories they represent.

In recent years, my home discipline of performance studies has taken a particular interest in rethinking approaches to the archive. The perceived ephemerality of performance has always proven a challenge to the archive: so much of what happens through performance does not leave archivable, material traces. Most notable of recent scholarship is Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Looking at a variety of performance traditions – spoken word, song, dance, festivals, gestures, etc. – Taylor theorizes the concept of the *repertoire* as a practice of embodied memory. In her reading, the archive and the repertoire work together to form a sense of cultural identity. Unfortunately for this study, many of Taylor's examples depend on a cultural memory that is learned through the experience of being raised in a particular community. For the majority of LGBT individuals who grow up in heterosexual households, LGBT culture is not something one is raised with, and this unique process of "coming out" into a community requires that an individual go out and find an experience of LGBT identity they can relate to.

Rebecca Schneider's *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* also contributes to the growing field of performance and archiving. Schneider finds similarities between how we understand history as a process of representation, and the performances of history – through plays, festivals and reenactments. Finding that what is fake and what is false in performance can also be found in traditional written histories, Schneider focuses on what remains from

performance, rather than what disappears. What this requires, and what Taylor touches on in her work, is that to some degree as a community, we collectively agree on the fictional elements that make up our histories. What we keep and what we remember is what we perceive as the most important parts of who we are as a culture. What we forget, or what we collectively invent, can provide an opportunity to adjust the narrative, to think differently about traditions, histories, and identities to offer different models and approaches to the world we live in.

Outline

As a point of entry, I begin looking at a school, rather than an archive. The formation of the ONE Institute of Homophile Studies in Los Angeles in 1956 would support the simultaneous founding of an archive. This chapter explores how the disciplining of homosexual identity as a scholarly field of study was a conscious and well-documented gesture towards imagining a collective homosexual minority in the United States with a historical and archivable past. Over four years, ONE developed several programs to achieve their mission including the publication of a quarterly scholarly journal, the formation of a school and distance-learning program, and the acquiring and classifying of materials to form an archive. Using early texts from the journal and from the school and through a close reading of the contents of the early ONE archive, I argue that ONE modeled their approach after the historicist methodologies of early 19th century European nation-states, who, following revolutions, conquests and emerging democratic republics, were attempting to re-define their own sense of a

collective national identity. Under this model, the ONE Archive not only provided the documentary field for the Institute's research, it legitimized homophile studies by materially proving the existence of homosexuals in history, and enforced the disciplinary ways of thinking about homosexuality established by the ONE Institute. ONE's historicist approach to homophile studies offered methodological strategies for the first histories of homosexuality published in the United States, contributed to a wave of community-based histories and archives projects across the country, and laid the groundwork for the later development of LGBT and sexuality studies programs at academic institutions.

Chapter Two explores the concept of the archive as home within the context of the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) in Brooklyn, New York – teasing out the relationships between public and private that are at the core of this archive's radical reimagining of the function and practice of an archive within a community. Since its founding in the early 1970s, the LHA has distanced itself from the image of an archive as an institution where an individual comes to conduct academic research. The homophile model of archiving articulated by W. Dorr Legg and Jim Kepner of the ONE Institute and Archives re-inscribed patriarchal systems of oppression by locating homosexual themes in the dominant narratives of the various disciplines of academia. Joan Nestle and the co-founders of the LHA have always sought to use history as a way of understanding one's own self in relation to a larger lesbian community. As one of the country's oldest continually operating archives relating to sexual identity, the LHA radically re-envisioned the role of the archive in lesbian culture, serving as a literal and metaphoric

home space / community center. The idea of an archive-as-home also extends to the hospitality volunteers show towards guests, and the sharing of history is regularly described by Nestle and the LHA staff as an act of familial, inter-generational engagement.

Chapter Three focuses on the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies at the University of Minnesota to explore the queer disruptive possibilities of the archive and the ways in which these disruptions are "managed" by archivists to ensure a consistency in the narrative of LGBT identity that archives attempt to articulate. When archives fail to do what is expected of them – which is inevitable given the impossibility of trying to stabilize the unstable – there exists a radical queer potentiality to question such expectations. Where the ONE Institute began as an institutional archive attached to a school, and the Lesbian Herstory Archives began as a grassroots archive, the Tretter Collection is unique in how it began as a grassroots archive before being purchased by a university. Jean Tretter's tendency to collect anything remotely related to LGBT identity exceeded the physical limits of the archival space. Without finding aids or an ability to organize everything in a way that made sense in an academic archive, it was a difficult archive to use in the traditional sense, but offered value in the ability to encounter the unexpected. The overabundance of the archive, the collection in excess, begins to suggest a possible framework for thinking of the queer archive.

In Chapter Four I look at a collection that is inherently queer – the Jack Smith archive at the Gladstone Gallery in New York – and theorize how its queerness can be kept active when the archive's stabilizing logics of ordering normally kill it. Jack Smith

was an avant garde film maker and performance artist, considered by contemporary scholars as one of the leaders of the early New York underground art movement, and an influence on later artists like Andy Warhol, John Waters, and Richard Foreman. Smith's estate was sold in 2008 to an art gallery after a prolonged legal battle. Consisting of drawings, collages, photographs, films, sound recordings, and sculpture by Smith, as well as his personal library, papers, and ephemera collected throughout his lifetime, the Smith estate represents the remaining physical traces of a man fascinated by the life of trash objects. Since his death, Smith's work has become synonymous with 'camp' and studies of his films and performances have focused on his aesthetics (which Smith changed constantly out of an aversion to creating a 'Jack Smith style'). Smith's commitment to perpetual change can even be found in his film work. During screenings of his infamous film *Flaming Creatures*, for example, Smith could be found in the projection booth before the show splicing and rearranging bits of celluloid, thus creating a new film experience each time it was shown. When Smith's films and performance artifacts enter into the archive, they become monuments to Smith the artist, rather than to the project of queer disruption that Smith dedicated his life to. Using contemporary theories on queer research, phenomenology and trash, I envision a project of queer archiving that proposes questions of the visitor/archivist/scholar, rather than an archive that offers answers.

Again, what is at stake in this project is the knowledge that how we think about sexual identity and LGBT communities is shaped in concrete ways through institutions like the archive. Even though individuals who may identify as LGBT may never set foot into an archive their entire life, the narratives the archives produce – the limitations the

archive imposes on how we conceive of LGBT identity – impact the ways we behave, the ways we interact with each other, the ways we choose to participate in society. Even if a person does not "buy in" to these narratives, they have significant consequences, as seen in the SCOTUS decisions on sodomy, or in the ongoing debates on same-sex marriage, or anti-discrimination legislation. Being aware of how institutions such as archives construct the narratives of sexual identity can allow us to take greater ownership over these narratives and build stronger communities, or to jettison narratives in order to open up new ways of *being* in the world.

Chapter I

Disciplining Sexuality, Archiving Identity: ONE and the Formation of Homophile Studies

"In our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*."
- Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1972

In October 1952, a small group of men and women founded an organization that sought to publish and promote research concerning "the integration into society of such persons whose behavior and inclinations vary from current social and moral standards" (Cutler 72). They took the name ONE Inc., from an essay on the works of Goethe by Thomas Carlyle in which Carlyle wrote "Of a truth, men are mystically united: a mystic bond of brotherhood makes all men one." Targeting "social variants" as well as the general public, ONE Inc. tackled their mission of integration through its four main divisions: publishing, education, research and social services. Through its magazines and the work of their school – the ONE Institute – the organization became one of the first to recognize homosexuality as a collective, historicized minority in the United States, and articulated the earliest methodologies for research in homosexual culture, setting the disciplinary limits of how homosexuality would be discussed within academia for decades to come.

A significant amount of recent scholarship has examined the social shift from homosexuality as a criminal behavior and medical disorder to a collective, social and cultural identity in the post-WWII period. Allan Bérubé's *Coming Out Under Fire* argues

that the war brought many men and women from rural, isolated areas into big cities and same-sex barracks and field stations where they encountered others with same-sex attraction, recognizing for the first time on a large scale that they were not alone. Published interviews, like those of noted 1940s psychologist Evelyn Hooker, reveal the impact of Alfred Kinsey's reports on human sexuality in men and women that famously reported 46% of men studied had both opposite and same-sex sexual encounters at some point in their lives, and that 10% of men studied had predominantly homosexual encounters. Hooker noted that while these numbers certainly suggested a wider range of sexual experiences than society seemed to collectively believe, the reports allowed homosexuals to feel a greater sense of presence and power in society:[5]

> Homosexuality was thought to be a comparatively rare phenomenon until Kinsey came along and provided very good evidence that there were… roughly 20 million gay men and women…. [That] was important because it gave great hope to gay people and lesbians because they, for the first time, realized that they were not the tiny minority, but actually a very sizable proportion of the population (Hooker 2000).

[5] In addition to Evelyn Hooker's quote in reference to the surge of validation experienced by homosexuals following the Kinsey report, I refer you also to Crompton 448; Higgins 157-159; Jennings 143; Johnson 53-54; Legg 1994, 14-15; and White 2009, 2-5. Dr. Hooker was most remembered for a study she conducted in 1957 where she gathered sixty general psychological profiles of men who identified as either exclusively heterosexual or exclusively homosexual. The team, ultimately, was unable to distinguish the homosexuals from the heterosexuals, concluding that, in terms of adjusting to society, there were no discernible differences between the two groups. Hooker's paper gained national attention with its publication in the *Journal of Projective Techniques* as "The Adjustment of the Male Overt Homosexual." Notably, Hooker became a regular speaker at ONE's Midwinter Institute, and her research on social adjustment among homosexuals was central to the group's peer counseling program. For information on the study, see Hooker 1957. For her participation in ONE, see Legg 1994, 36,44.

While homosexuals at the time could take comfort from Kinsey's statistics, the numbers fed into growing anxieties about the collapse of American values and the threat of Communist influences. David Johnson's 2004 book *The Lavender Scare* was the first serious examination of the overwhelming hysteria sparked by McCarthy hearings that suggested homosexuals had taken over the State Department and were selling secrets to the Russians. Johnson's work reveals that McCarthy's attack on homosexuals as a collective group of subversives helped imagine homosexuality as an organized minority in the United States in ways homosexuals were only just beginning to imagine for themselves. Fearful portrayals of subversive homosexual collectives paved the way for *actual* homosexual collectives, like ONE, to be formed. C. Todd White's 2009 study *Pre-Gay L.A.* is a social history of the formations of these first organized collectives, documenting the founding, run, and ultimate closure of two major homophile organizations – the Mattachine Society and ONE, Inc..

Despite all of these histories, what hasn't been studied – and what this chapter seeks to address – is ONE's systematic and methodical formation of a new field of study that provided a framework for historians to reach back and claiming historical moments as relating to homosexual culture. Homophile studies, as the field was called, created the disciplinary framework that would not only allow one to establish a school – the ONE Institute for Homophile Studies, but also an archive that would support and validate their research agenda. Where other homophile groups such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis were focused on the homosexual subject in the present and in the future, ONE looked to the past in order to assert that homosexuals constituted a

historically oppressed, collective minority, and as such, had a right to be protected under the law.

There is an important distinction to make, however, between recognizing a history of individuals who had same-sex desires and recognizing a collective social history of same-sex sexuality. The former is endemic to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century perception of the individual homosexual as mentally unstable and morally corrupt. Thus, as a psychological and legal entity, a homosexual was a defective person within a larger 'normal' society, incapable of sharing a history or culture in the same way that thieves and schizophrenics do not share a collective past.[6] The latter – a *social* history of same-sex sexuality – emerged in the post-war United States with the recognition of homosexuality as a *collective minority*. It is this shift towards thinking of homosexuals as a collective, and the role of the ONE Institute of Homophile Studies and the ONE Archive in Los Angeles in defining this collective, that forms the main inquiry of this chapter.

The legacy of ONE's work is immeasurable. While few have heard the term 'homophile studies' today, the discipline was the precursor to contemporary GLBT and sexuality studies programs, providing the foundational framework within which the above mentioned histories of homosexuality continue to be written.

It's all very meta.

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[6] Austrian novelist Karl Maria Kertbeny coined the term 'homosexual' in 1869 in a pamphlet arguing against Germany's anti-sodomy laws. He defined the homosexual as a person who finds sexual pleasures with members of the same sex, and that there were at least three different kinds of homosexuals; tribades, who were either active or passive female homosexuals; mutuals, who were male homosexuals that found pleasure in mutual masturbation; and pygists, who were male homosexuals that engaged in active or passive sodomy. See Feray (1991) and Herzer (1985).

And writing metahistories of histories and archives offers certain research challenges. One of the defining characteristics of the modern archive, I argue, is its intentional desire to not be the focus of study. From the perspective of the modern archivist, a scholar goes to the archive to conduct research on the social history of farmers in 19th century rural England – for example – not to examine how the archive came about collecting its materials or how it decided to organize them. The archive is, as I mentioned in my discussion of objectivism and the Rankean archive in the introduction, a laboratory, meant to validate claims of history through the objective "truth" captured by the presence of archival material. The material in the archive is meant to speak for itself, and the work of the archivist is meant to go unnoticed. Pay no attention to the archivist behind the curtain. Indeed, so strong is the desire to conceal the work of the archivist so that the documents might "speak for themselves," most libraries and archives keep whatever organizational records they have on themselves – memos, acquisition contracts, internal correspondence, etc. – separate from the research collection and generally only permit staff to access them. Studying the archive can be further complicated in the case of community-based archives where incomplete records may be kept in the first place, collections may frequently be moved between homes and offices, items may be improperly stored leading to their damage, and where absent or unenforced research policies sometimes mean items are taken and not returned. This is certainly the case with the ONE Archive. Additionally, an internal disagreement and subsequent legal battle between two of the founding members in 1965 led to a court ruling where the organization was separated – the name ONE and the education division to be

administered by W. Dorr Legg and the archives, including the administrative records of ONE, would be administered by Don Slater under the new auspices of the Homosexual Information Center (HIC).[7] Thus, the new ONE Archive started by Legg in 1965 lacked the organization's records. In the 1980s, the HIC archive was badly damaged during an internal dispute over ownership and control of the collection. One of the board members ransacked the archive overnight, damaging materials and disturbing the original organization of the collection. Following the deaths of Legg and Slater in the 1990s, many of the original ONE materials in the HIC collection were given back to the ONE Archive, which since 2010 is run by the University of Southern California Libraries' Special Collections Unit. Yet, while USC now holds much of what remains of the ONE's organizational records, the group's in-fighting meant that many of the founding members chose not to archive their personal collections, leaving even larger gaps in the collection's holdings.

And so what remains to conduct this investigation into the ONE Archive and ONE Institute for Homophile Studies? Fortunately, the archive contains the personal papers of the co-founder and long-time leader of the ONE Institute, W. Dorr Legg, as well as Jim Kepner, who started the archive with materials from his personal collection and served as its first archivist. These personal papers contain limited correspondence to individuals interested in the work of ONE and help to understand how Legg and Kepner understood and articulated the work they were doing.

There exists a list of 2,102 published titles that were in the ONE Archive's holdings at the time of the 1965 split which include Kepner's original donations, but no

[7] The separation of ONE is detailed in C. Todd White's *Pre-Gay L.A*.

record of the archive's original manuscript collections. What remains of these original publications (books, magazines, and leaflets), which were part of the HIC collection, are now held within the Vern and Bonnie Bullough Collection on Sex and Gender at the Oviatt Library at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). It is possible to read through these titles – as I do later in this chapter – to get a snapshot of the resources available to the ONE Institute in its early days, and to get a sense of what the organization felt was important to collect.

ONE's publishing arm produced several periodicals that have been vital to my research, particularly *ONE Magazine* that published many of the organization's original treatises and mission statements, and the *ONE Institute Quarterly of Homophile Studies*, which published the institute's radical articulations of methodology and many of the field's earliest research articles.

What does remain of the organizational records for the ONE Institute and Archive focuses heavily on the organization after the 1965 split. ONE Institute records include the organization's articles of incorporation and other tax-related documents filed with the state, correspondence from 1953-1985, syllabi, catalogs, class schedules, class materials, teacher notes, tests, graded papers, attendance counts, admissions and promotional materials, development files, and employee records. The ONE Library and Archive records are largely limited to ascension records from the mid-1970s on, circulation data from 1967-1984, cataloging rules and manuals developed by the staff from the 1980s, and reports to the ONE Inc. administrative committee from the 1950s on. While limited in scope, these documents also provide important insight into how the organization was

consciously defining the parameters of a new field of study, as well as the complications involved.

Finally, W. Dorr Legg published his opus *Homophile Studies in Theory and Practice* in 1994, the same year he died. The volume serves many purposes. It was an opportunity for Legg to offer a formal history of the ONE Institute, which hadn't been written, an uncomplicated history that entirely omits internal conflicts in the organization, and which – perhaps not entirely unreasonably – highlights the groundbreaking nature of the work he did. The book also provides a broad overview of the specific disciplines of homophile studies, in an apparent attempt to encourage its continued adoption at a time when many schools and colleges were developing research programs in sexuality studies. While it is important to read Legg's work with an awareness of his intentions with the volume – his desire to reanimate homophile studies in the context of the 1990s emergence of sexuality studies programs, wanting to secure his own legacy in such movements, purifying ONE's histories of the conflicts that led to its split, etc. – what is also remarkable about the book is the 125+ page appendix that reproduces a number of archival documents from the Institute including syllabi, course offerings, promotional materials, and internal memoranda.

These materials form the available archive of this chapter, and reading across the archive illuminates the ways ONE set the terms that sexuality studies would use to carry out its research for decades to come. They reveal the challenges encountered by the early members of ONE in defining the limits of homophile studies – challenges that expressed complex desires of social belonging and difference that were explicitly debated within the

group. To establish a new discipline, ONE looked to Rankean historicism and colonial models of education used by the United States in the Philippines for frameworks. These models allowed ONE to position homophile studies as a field which exists within the power structures of academia, while simultaneously affirming an "outsider" status that was both exotic and as-yet undiscovered. The combination of the two offered the legitimacy of being intelligible to established academic models (Rankean historicism), but also a seductive, unchartered field waiting for serious students and scholars to come along and lay their claims.

ONE and the Study of the Homosexual Minority

In 1951, noted sociology professor Edward Sagarin published *The Homosexual in America* under the pseudonym of Donald Webster Cory. The book was one of the first widely available publications to characterize the homosexual as a minority culture in the United States.[8] "The homosexuals are a minority group," wrote Sagarin,

> consisting of large numbers of people who belong, participate and are constantly aware of something that binds them to others and separates them from the larger stream of life; yet a group without a spokesman, without a leader, without a publication, without an organization, without a philosophy of life, without an accepted justification for its own existence. (6)

The founding members of ONE sought to respond to the climate Sagarin eloquently described. They believed education could be a powerful tool in transforming society's

[8] Robert Duncan's essay "The Homosexual in Society," published in the underground magazine *Politics* in 1944, also argued that homosexuality should be recognized as a minority.

perception of homosexuality – of creating a culture, a way of *being* homosexual, that would encourage leaders to emerge. If the members of ONE could prove that homosexuals constituted a historically persecuted minority, then – and only then – would it be possible to advocate for legal protection.

But who were these founding members? Of the seven founding members who signed the ONE's articles of incorporation, none had formal training in pedagogy, philosophy, cultural studies, history, or the sciences. They came from diverse backgrounds, and knew one another socially through mutual friends or membership in either the Mattachine Society or Knights of the Clock.[9] This, of course, meant that the founding members were all men, and moved in the same social circles. Biographical information on some of these members is hard to come by, particularly since some members didn't participate in ONE for long and have left little record. Martin Block was a stout young writer from New York who owned The Studio Bookshop in Hollywood. Antonio Reyes was a ceramics artist and an occasional paid dancer in Mexican night clubs around Los Angeles. Dale Jennings was something of a Renaissance man – a dancer briefly under Martha Graham, a child prodigy with the violin, an army soldier during WWII who served in the South Pacific, and a novelist and screenwriter who made much of his living as a copywriter in advertising. Bailey Whitaker (a.k.a. Guy Rousseau) was an African American schoolteacher who specialized in developmental disabilities and was the only member of this early group to have any training in education – though, for reasons unknown, his work with ONE would largely be in the publications division and not with the Institute. Don Slater graduated from the University of Southern

[9] The Knights of the Clock were a small group of men involved in interracial same-sex relationships.

California in 1952 on the G.I. Bill with a degree in English literature and worked at a local bookstore. W. Dorr Legg grew up in Michigan and went to school first for an undergraduate degree in piano, and then two masters degrees – one in landscape design and the other in urban planning. He worked for many years as an urban planner in New York, Florida and Oregon before settling in Los Angeles, and would eventually leave that profession in 1958 when ONE's finances permitted him to be employed full time. Merton Bird, an accountant, was the founder of the Knights of the Clock. At the time of ONE's founding, Bird and Legg were in a relationship. Writing years later, Legg described Bird as a "brilliant young black man" who originally had the idea to publish a pocket-size homophile periodical (Legg 1). Antonio Reyes and Don Slater were also a couple, and would be together for over 51 years, until Slater's death. Two additional corporate members were added in July 1953, both women, as assistants to the all-male editorial board. Joan Corbin was recruited as the primary artist for ONE's publications, and her lover, Irma "Corky" Wolf, contributed art as needed.

The core group of seven went to work drafting the Articles of Incorporation that would become the basis for the organization's charter.[10] The Articles proposed that ONE's main purpose would be the publication of a magazine offering a "scientific, historical, and critical point of view" on homosexuality. Within a year, though, members of the group turned their attention toward starting a school where homosexuals could learn more about themselves (historically, legally, psychologically, etc.), and also educate the larger, non-homosexual society through research, publications and public lectures. By

[10] The Articles were filed with the California Secretary of State.on February 7, 1953, with the charter established May 27 of the same year. A copy of the Articles are reproduced in the appendix of Legg 1994: 338-342.

1955, ONE had formalized the Education Division, led by Legg and joined by Julian "Woody" Underwood and Jim Kepner who had joined ONE and shared Legg's interest in developing a school. Underwood was a mathematician and philosopher, and Kepner was a journalist who had been collecting books on homosexuality since the early 1940s.

A formal school of homophile studies had not been attempted before and the three men soon became overwhelmed by the task ahead. There was little precedent for what they were doing. The closest comparison was Magnus Hirschfeld's *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* in Berlin, which operated from its inception in 1914 until 1933 when it was shuttered under the Third Reich and the contents of its library were burned.[11] Hirschfeld's institute, however, was dedicated to the study of all variations of human sexuality – not just homosexuality – and was more interested in scientific research than history, cultural studies or educating the general public. Members of ONE anticipated resistance to creating what they saw as a new field of study focusing on the homosexual. Hirschfeld had been able to establish his controversial Institute for Sexual Research in the midst of the relatively liberal environment of Weimar Germany. ONE was forming on the tail of strong social and political conservatism in the years following World War II and the climate of polarization and conspiracy under McCarthyism.

An early statement of the principals of the ONE Education Division addressed their aims in changing society's attitudes towards homosexuals and emphasized the newness of what they were attempting to do. "Turning to educators themselves, it is quite likely that all but a few would greet with blank incomprehension any statement that

[11] Much has been written about Hirschfeld and the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft. See, for example, Wolff 1986; Grau 1995; Gordon 2000; and Mancini 2010.

education in the field of homosexuality concerns a great deal more than psychology, medicine or law" (Cutler 74). Here, Legg – who took the lead on developing ONE's education division – writing as Marvin Cutler, challenged society's limited perception of the homosexual as a medical or juridical subject. Legg argued that education had failed to recognize "that there exists an entire area of study, an area as yet practically without resources, disciplines, and academic faculty, or even students, yet an area of vital meaning to millions of persons" – a failure ONE would take as its mission to rectify (74). In emphasizing the void within which ONE emerged, Legg articulated the origin story of homophile studies as discovery. The mission of the ONE Institute and Archive would be to address the void that failed to represent homosexuals in all areas of education by maintaining an image of absence which confirms the minority status of the homosexual, while also trying to fill it with new research and documentary evidence.

The narrative of discovery described here and in other documents from the ONE Institute conceals the actions of the ONE Education Division in consciously establishing the methodologies and limits of homophile studies. Here, Legg portrayed himself and others participating in the ONE Institute as facilitators helping others to see this "entire area of study" that is waiting to be discovered. In other documents describing the formation of the ONE Institute and Archive, Legg positions himself as a creator, rather than facilitator, stressing the newness and uniqueness of homophile studies - not as a field waiting to be discovered, but rather a field to be invented. For example, Legg's essay "Homosexuality in History" posits homophile history as a new discipline, and as a new discipline, requiring set methodological procedures that can be consistently carried out by

future scholars. The essay, which I explore in detail later in this chapter, continues with a reflection on several established historiographic methods and an argument for historicism as the most suitable method for the aims of ONE. The ability of Legg and other participants of the ONE Institute and Archive to strategically shift their positions as facilitators and creators of homophile studies allowed a flexibility in dealing with audience. Depending on the need, homophile studies could, for example, be seen as a field waiting to be discovered which suggests its presence is inevitable, whether it is addressed or not. Such a position frames dissent against the work of ONE as ignorance and a refusal of reality. It also suggests that the homosexual can, and needs, to come into consciousness of their legacy – Legg concludes his statement on the early principles of the ONE Education division by stating "the homosexual, must learn his place in history and what has been his effect on history" (Cutler 74). Alternately, by framing homophile studies in other instances as invention, Legg explicitly articulates questions of method and production. Invention becomes a way for Legg to solicit interest in participating in the work of ONE. The discourse of creation is seductive, and Legg deployed it particularly in journal articles directed toward a homosexual audience to encourage others to become members of ONE and help to direct the future of homophile studies through research and participation in the ONE Institute's classes.

ONE's earliest ventures into education described the obscurity of homophile studies variously as discovery or invention while also stressing ONE's role in "raising the homosexual's consciousness" of him/herself. But the Education Division faced major methodological challenges in establishing the parameters of the discipline as they

understood it – questions they articulated implicitly and explicitly in their first articles in the Institute's publication *ONE Institute Quarterly of Homophile Studies*. With countless words used to describe a multitude of variations in human sexuality, how would ONE scholars address terminology? What would form the subjects of study for the purposes of instruction at the ONE Institute and for the purposes of acquisition and processing at the ONE Archive? For the purposes of selecting publications for instruction, how would they separate what they saw as legitimate, unprejudiced research from research that began from an assumption of homosexuality as a disorder or crime? Would it ever be possible to reach out beyond the Los Angeles community with their classes and research? Unsure of how to tackle these challenges, the three core members of the Education Division (Legg, Underwood and Kepner) found a mentor and supporter in Merritt M. Thompson, Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Southern California. According to W. Dorr Legg, he met Thompson at ONE's first Midwinter Institute, an annual conference of speakers, performance and social events. Legg claimed Thompson had attended out of "a great interest in the day's events and offered to help the fledgling Education Division" (Legg 1994, 20). As a student of the work of education theorist John Dewey, and with extensive experience establishing American-style education systems in foreign countries, Merritt Thompson had the skills and background ONE needed to define the field of homophile studies and establish a school.

Merritt Thompson and the ONE Colonial Education Model

Thompson's career began in 1905 as a teacher in a rural school in New Jersey. In 1906, he was transferred by the United States government to the Philippines to assist in establishing a national school system. In 1896, the United States took possession of the Philippines from Spain as part of the Treaty of Paris, which ended the Spanish-American War. The bloody conflict was one of the United States' first forays into international colonialism at a time when the nascent country was attempting to assert itself as a global power on the heels of a devastating civil war. Establishing new schools in the Philippines afforded the United States the opportunity to spread not just the English language, but also American Progressive ideals. The education initiatives in the Philippines drew inspiration from the theories of progressive education developed by John Dewey, whom Thompson greatly admired.[12] These theories proposed that education could be a powerful tool of social reformation. Dewey firmly believed that while education could instruct a student in general content, it should also be used as a tool to teach a person how to live. In the United States, Dewey's theories on education were used to acculturate immigrants with the promise of better, more wholesome lives – part of the Progressive Era reform programs of such institutions like the Hull-House in Chicago.[13] The model of education Thompson helped to institute in the Philippines replicated the work being done in the United States. Following the annexation of the Philippines, the U.S. government sought to Americanize the country's citizens. Thus, Thompson's project of education in the

[12] Thompson was an active member of the John Dewey Society in the United States and devoted a large section of his landmark book *The History of Education* (1933) to describing Dewey's theories. See Thompson 1933, 51-54; and Legg 1994, 21.
[13] See Shannon Jackson's *Lines of Activity* (200) for an in-depth analysis of Dewey's involvement with Hull-House and the Progressive movement.

Philippines was not simply to spread a system of knowledge, but rather a system of *being*. The small education system created by Spain during the 350 years they governed the island focused primarily on teaching the Christian doctrine to an elite few. Merritt Thompson and others sent by the United States created a system of education rooted in the teaching of the English language, the development of "life-skills," and training in hygiene practices aimed at holistically trying to make Filipinos behave more like Americans.[14] Thompson used such practices in the Philippines, and again when he was transferred to Peru to help reorganize the country's national education system from 1911-1915 and 1919-1921.[15]

Thompson's work as an architect of colonial education systems heavily influenced the formation of the ONE Institute. To begin with, Thompson's suggestions on structuring the field of homophile studies were directly influenced by his interest and experience applying Dewey's theories in the Philippines and Peru. While the ONE Institute was not starting a program to teach hygiene practices, they were implicitly forming an education model that would allow ONE's research and education practices to be recognized and assimilated into dominant education models in the United States. ONE's founders were not interested in simply teaching homosexuals facts about homosexuality – they were attempting to imagine and disseminate a different way of being within American society. ONE's homosexual would embrace difference only so far

[14] See Alexander Calata's essay "The Role of Education in Americanizing Filipinos" in McFerson 2002, 89-97; and Holt 2002, 71-74.

[15] The Republic of Peru in the early twentieth century was heavily dependent on capital investments from the United States, creating a form of economic colonization that, among other things, spread to the education sector. After serving in Peru, Thompson returned to the United States in 1921 where he eventually became a Professor of Education at the University of Southern California, leading the graduate program in that department for many years. His *History of Education*, first published in 1933, was a popular text in post-secondary education programs, with reprintings well into the 1960s.

as to demonstrate that the homosexual was just as normal as everyone else – and indeed had been a part of society throughout history, only positioned at fringe of visibility. To be un-American in the United States at this time was tantamount to an accusation of Communism – and homosexuals were widely regarded as Communists at this time.[16] The goal in ONE's system was not to be *more* American – they already saw themselves as American, and proudly so – but to be recognized as an integral part of the American social fabric. Following Dewey's theory that education was a powerful tool in transforming society, ONE hoped that assimilation and visibility would make homosexuality more positively visible to society as a whole. In later years, this policy meant that ONE and its affiliate organizations like the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis – collectively described as the 'homophile movement' by the early 1970s – would become negatively associated by the radical protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s with trying to assimilate homosexuals into an oppressive society.

In addition to Thompson's use of his own experiences as an architect of colonial education systems, early meetings and publications from the ONE Education Division adopted the language of colonialism to describe their undertaking, positioning homophiles as colonizers of knowledge as well as oppressed colonized subjects. As the ONE Institute began to take shape, its founders proudly stressed what they saw as a project comparable to, if not more dramatic than the colonial projects undertaken by Merritt Thompson abroad. Recalling those early meetings, W. Dorr Legg wrote that "insights which Merritt contributed from his many years of work in the Third World added a special flavor that made the meetings endlessly fascinating and stimulating"

[16] See David Johnson's *The Lavender Scare* (2004).

(Legg 22). In a 1956 report delivered to the ONE directors, Legg (writing under the pseudonym Marvin Cutler) compared contemporary homosexuals to "primitive or nomadic races who find themselves suddenly thrust into the very midst of 20th century living, while lacking institutions, traditions and standards for guidance" (Cutler 74). Further, homosexuals could be thought of as members of a vast, universal Diaspora, "far more numerous than the Jews, yet having no holy books (or not aware that it has them), no synagogue, no teachings, no community life to bring it into focus" (Cutler 74). By drawing a parallel between homosexuality and Jews in the Diaspora, Legg relates ONE's work explicitly to the fight to establish Israel in the years following the Holocaust. Such a parallel suggests a similar claim to political belonging, while underlying the need to establish some sort of social structure that will allow homosexuals to have a greater awareness of their community – a social structure that, Legg seems to suggest, ONE might be able to begin to provide. Legg's earlier association of homosexuality with "primitive or nomadic races" might seem counterintuitive given the history of negative connotations circulating separately around homosexuals and those living in non-industrial societies. Yet, such racially-charged rhetoric from the Education Division underscored ONE's position that homosexuals constituted a repressed minority in their own country. The "primitive" reflected the image of homophile studies as rough, nascent, and waiting to be discovered. The "special flavor" of the "Third World" that Legg noted in the early meetings of ONE attempted to appeal to colonialism's connotations with the exotic. The language of colonialism allowed Thompson and Legg to create an aura of fetish around homophile studies, and in figuring those working at the ONE Institute as both colonizers

and colonized, Legg and Thompson signaled homosexuals would be in a unique position of developing and controlling their own narratives.

Drawing from Dewey, Thompson also argued that the personal experiences of the students should be valued as an important facet of the ONE Institute's core curriculum. In part, experience offers a way for students to relate potentially abstract concepts to something they could personally identify with. Legg also argued that experience was necessary for practical reasons. Without published textbooks to draw examples from, the experiences of students and instructors often formed the central evidence for courses ranging from psychology to law. Recounting the first class offered by the ONE Institute, a general *Introduction to Homophile Studies* course in 1956, Legg wrote that the third session on psychology "was much more detailed in presentation, a natural result coming from the personal experiences of everyone in the class. Several were not hesitant in citing long lists of the sins of omission and commission from their own reading and contacts with therapists and psychologists" (Legg 1994, 28). Here, the personal experiences of the students can either confirm or negate what is either being taught, or what the class reads. In placing primacy on experience, the ONE Institute positions the student as both the source of evidence and the scholar who interprets it. The student becomes the figure of authority of their own experience, reflecting the dual role of the homophile studies as colonized/colonizer, and that experience becomes part of the archive. The primacy of experience would become a central component of early research in LGBT Studies that would ultimately become the focus of debate through much of the 1990s. In her 1991 essay "The Evidence of Experience," Joan Scott suggested that the deployment of

experience as evidence has allowed historians to make universalizing claims over large, diverse groups of people. Experience, she argued, conceals difference and normative deviation. Instead, Scott suggested scholars should examine the ways experience is narrated as a way of seeing how subjects – women, gays, etc. – are discursively produced. Scott's essay helped reframe the discussion away from projects like ONE's that focused on the naturalization of experience, toward projects like this dissertation, which examine how such projects of naturalization give shape to sexual identity.

As an advisor for the ONE Education Division, Thompson's experience as an education reformer in the Philippines and Peru were critical to the founding of the ONE Institute. During the spring and summer of 1956, Thompson stressed to the members of the Education Division that what they were attempting was radical, and that the formation of homophile studies as a new field would require patience and explicit articulations of what this field was (and was not). "Structure the field," Thompson repeatedly told the group. "Define your terms, for you are setting them" (Legg 1994, 21).

Defining the Disciplinary Limits: Gaining Control of the Discourse of Sexuality

Thompson's charge to define the terms underscores the larger importance of ONE's education project. Their goal was not simply to teach, but to gain larger control of the discourse surrounding same-sex sexuality in the United States. The significance of this control cannot be overstated. Those in control of the discourse had the ability to sway public opinion. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault describes those who participate in the setting of discourse as 'authorities of delimitation' (41). By the 1950s,

ONE was not the only authority of delimitation. Indeed, given major publications by psychologists like Kinsey, Hooker, and Sagarin, or the heavily publicized discourse surrounding homosexuality in the halls of the McCarthy-era government, ONE became a participant in a much larger post-WWII struggle over terminology that radically altered public opinion towards same-sex sexuality.

Thus, by the time Merritt Thompson charged the founders of the ONE Institute with structuring the field and defining their terms, they were already engaging with a broad range of definitions, constructed by the competing desires of those with claims to power - in medicine, sociology and the federal government, for example. ONE's Education Division first confronted the challenge of structuring the field by sorting through the numerous terms that had become linked to same-sex desire through history; among which tribade, sodomite, fracatrice, pederast, invert, pervert, Dioning, lesbian, fellator, catamite, sapphist, Urning, bugger, androgyne, homosexual and homophile were cited as only a few from Western cultures (Legg 23). At some point in this process, the members of the Education Division reached the conclusion that they would choose a single term that would reflect all of the various terms for same-sex desire through history. ONE ultimately decided to refer to itself as a homophile organization and formally named their school the ONE Institute of Homophile Studies.

Why homophile as opposed to one of the many other possible options – particularly homosexual, which was in common usage at the time? First, homophile comes from the Greek roots *homos* (the same) and *philos* (love for). In emphasizing love over sex, homophile challenged the public perception of same-sex activity as a sexual

deviation, void of the possibility of forming loving, enduring relationships. Second, unlike homosexual, homophile was a term created by those it describes. The term homophile had been adopted by the Dutch same-sex advocacy group *Cultuur en ontspannings Centrum* (C.O.C.) in the late 1940s as an alternative to homosexual. Homosexual, particularly by the 1950s, carried medical and juridical connotations with mental illness, abnormality and objectionable pathology, and had become an unfavorable term among many early activists.[17]

Third, and finally, settling on a single term helped ONE to firmly establish homophile studies as legitimate within established discourses of history. Jacques Rancière's theories on the writing of history offer some insights into how ONE used history to legitimize the field of homophile studies, and, in turn, the homosexual in society. In *The Names of History*, Rancière attempts to reveal "the unconscious" of historical discourse – the aspects of historical discourse that are glossed over or suppressed in order for histories to be seen as visible and legitimate within contemporary frameworks of history-telling (xix). For history to be seen as visible and legitimate, Rancière argues that it engages an "impossible task of articulating three contracts in a single discourse" which he identifies as the scientific, narrative, and political contracts (9). The scientific contract "discovers the latent order beneath the manifest order," and "affirms itself as absolute," as truth (9, 51). This latent order is hidden, and is made visible through the narrative contract. For Rancière, the narrative contract makes the latent order visible by layering on to it the readable forms of a story, with a beginning and

[17] See Legg 1994, 25. Legg also cites Jean-Claude Féray's historicized treatises against the term homosexual from the French magazine *Arcadie*: "Un Histoire Critique du Mot Homosexualité" January 1981, 11-21; February 1981, 115-124; March 1981, 171-181; and April 1981, 246-258.

an end, and with characters and events. The political contract ties the scientific and narrative contracts to what Rancière calls "the contradictory constraints of the age of the masses," which might be seen as major reference points in historical memory – "the regularities of common law and the great tumults of democracy, of revolutions and counter-revolutions" (9). When these three contracts are united within the discourses of history, it becomes legible *as* history, and thus, readable and teachable to all.

When applied to the work of the ONE Institute, Rancière's three-fold contract illuminates the ways the organization made the history of homosexuality visible and legitimate. A single term such as homophile offers a scientific clarity of terms, limiting the scope of ONE's investigation and providing a clear, knowable (though, as yet, unknown and therefore all the more appealing to the sense of scientific discovery) subject. The latent order of homophile studies is discovered within the manifest orders of established disciplines (named explicitly as biology and medicine, psychology, sociology and anthropology, law, religion, literature and the arts, and philosophy). This latent order of homophile studies can then be filled with historical narratives – the sonnets of William Shakespeare, the libel trials of Oscar Wilde, Joan of Arc's suggestive wearing of male clothing, etc. Politics provides the context to tie the scientific with the narrative. In this case, ONE folded complex terms from the past like *sodomite* and *sapphist* under the new umbrella of *homophile*, making it possible to situate homophilia throughout the grand narratives of established history. Through this lens, for example, the contemporary persecutions of homosexuals by the federal government could be seen as a continuation of sodomites being burned at the stake in Medieval Europe. *Bugger* and *pederast* became

watch-words in historical texts for homophilia, a code of sorts to keep an eye out for while doing research, rather than time and space specific terms with possible meanings other than those associated with 1950s conceptions of same-sex sexual identity. With this one move, the selection of a single term, ONE was able to, borrowing the words of Rancière, "discover" a unified history of homophilia that could be tested against documentary materials in an archive. In order to make homophile studies legible within the manifest order of history – and as a result, making it readable and teachable to all – the extensive nuances and historical diversity of the terms that fell under homophile were suppressed. The new history of homophilia was teachable, and in setting their terms, the ONE Institute became a significant player in the power struggle over the discourse of same-sex sexuality in the United States.

Spreading the Word: 'Some Problems of Method'

The next step for the ONE Institute was to begin teaching the ways of thinking about same-sex sexuality that the Education Division had developed. The first class of the ONE Institute of Homophile Studies was held at ONE's Los Angeles offices on October 22, 1956. The class, an Introduction to Homophile Studies, attempted to lay the foundation of the field that the Education Division had been carefully crafting over the previous year. The course was separated into nine sessions, meeting once a week for two or more hours per class, with each class covering an individual sub-discipline within the field of Homophile Studies. They were, in order: biology and medicine, history, psychology, sociology and anthropology, law, religion, literature and the arts, and

philosophy. The ninth session was set aside to "raise important questions about the relationships of each of these [sub-disciplines] to the others" (Legg 1994, 29). Fourteen students took this first class, all staff members of the ONE Institute. This first class consolidated the theories and methodologies Legg and Thompson had been developing, modeled how to conduct research in homophile studies, and created a means for disseminating it – the staff members present in the class were being trained to become teachers of future classes. The instructor of each class session – a staff member who claimed an interest or specialty in a given sub-discipline – made syllabi, outlines and bibliographies on that day's content available to the students with the aim that they were learning not only the theories and foundations of Homophile Studies, but also pedagogical approaches to teaching future classes based on the material available to them at that moment.

While the Institute would continue offering classes through the mid-1980s, the early members of the ONE Institute recognized the need to disseminate information about the emerging field beyond the comparatively limited walls of their Los Angeles classroom. They needed a means to publish their research findings, and spread the new theories they were creating. In 1958, the ONE Institute and the ONE Board of Directors announced the publication of the *ONE Institute Quarterly of Homophile Studies* – a "serious but readable journal to disseminate the results of the Institute's studies in the homophile side of history, religion, law, literature and the sciences, and also to print or evaluate studies or researches by other scholars in the field" (Kepner 1959, 1). The pages of *ONE Institute Quarterly* contain some of the earliest treatises on a homophile

historiography and reflect the conscious debates and decisions that helped establish histories of sexuality as a unique discipline.

The first issue of the *ONE Institute Quarterly*, published in the spring of 1958, included W. Dorr Legg's essay "Homophile Studies: Some Problems of Method" which serves as his manifesto on the value of homophile studies as a discipline, and therefore, the value of the ONE Institute. The essay began by articulating the difference between 'homophilia' and 'homosexuality.' Legg associated homosexuality with the sciences; specifically with the medical research of biology, the sexual studies of anthropology, the classifications of sociology, the prejudices of law, and the classic and contemporary research of psychology.[18] Legg's frustration with the limitations of the term is evident: "Homosexuality, and the homosexual," he wrote, "are viewed as narrowly specific aspects of the field but by no means as the whole of it" (Legg 1958, 4). Further, each of the fields of science he mentions has failed to adequately address questions of homosexuality because of prejudices within the field, hostility from religious institutions who sway legal opinion, a lack of training in homosexual issues among researchers, and the inaccessibility of "objective" research published in foreign languages – particularly the psychological studies conducted in Germany from 1898-1908.

In contrast, Legg associated 'homophilia' specifically with the humanities including history, art, literature and religion. Insisting that this particular essay was not the time to delve into "any general examination of theories of history," he reflected with

[18] Legg's association of homosexuality with science emphasizes the trend at the time to link the term 'homosexual' with mental disorders and social deviance. Homosexuality was listed as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association until 1973 through the efforts of Frank Kameny, Barbara Gittings and the newly-established National Gay Task Force. See Marcus (1992).

surprise that the current discipline of history has largely avoided addressing the sexual proclivities of the major figures from the past. "What of the many homophiles who at every stage of history have played such important roles for good or for ill? Was their homosexuality incidental to their roles in history, as is so commonly assumed?" Legg's quick shift to another subject suggests he felt the role of sexuality in history was much more important than the discipline had been treating it. For Legg, literature offers valuable global insights into the homosexual through history. However, Legg suggests that contemporary literary critics frequently "interpret away" a character's homosexuality, and translations from languages ranging from Sanskrit and Persian to Greek and German are unreliable "because those trained in the study of literatures seldom have enough knowledge of homophilia to properly interpret their findings, or make accurate translations of certain words and ideas" (7).

The driving force behind the ONE Institute and the formation of homophile studies, as articulated in this article, stems from the failings of the scientific and humanistic disciplines to sufficiently address homosexuality and homophilia, respectively. That the myriad of disciplines that constitute the study of human existence could actively deny and ignore the sexual variant in their research "seems almost incredible." And so, in response, Legg sets forth an outline for the ONE Institute's mission. The first task for the ONE Institute "is the collection and classification of whatever work the various arts and sciences may already have done in the field" (7). Noting that such work is already underway, Legg's description of collection and classification refers to the library and archive organized by the ONE Institute in 1956 to

support research. The second task Legg outlined for the ONE Institute was to take the collected, classified works, and separate the stronger studies from the weaker ones, arguing that the established criteria in each respective discipline would serve as a suitable model for judging the value of the various studies. This, Legg argued, would prevent future scholars from needlessly replicating research that had already been conducted. The third task would be evaluating the disciplines as a whole in order to determine whether they indeed offer anything of value to homophile studies. "In this way," Legg noted, "certain fields might be found as less useful than commonly thought, others stimulated into greater activity" (7). Finally, after careful analysis of the work relating to homophilia that had already been conducted, Legg concluded that it is then possible for the scholars at the ONE Institute to begin developing their own theoretical positions concerning homosexuality and homophilia.

W. Dorr Legg's "Homophile Studies: Some Problems of Method" consciously articulates a distinction between the various disciplines of humanist studies and how each of them have overwhelmingly failed to address the conditions – past and present – of the homosexual. Legg described the goal of Homophile Studies to be righting this wrong through rigorous, ample research on homophilia using the standards of scholarship already established by the respective disciplines of humanistic studies. This is significant because despite the emphasis on the newness of the field of homophile studies, Legg seems to argue that the purpose of homophile studies is corrective – to monitor other disciplines and encourage them to include homophiles in their research.

Thus, while Legg claims the newness of homophile studies, he ultimately concludes that the field will be built on the existing disciplines that once excluded them and, consequently, Legg reinforces the primacy of established methodologies. Regardless of whatever new theoretical approaches could be devised by the ONE Institute, they would exist only within the limited frameworks of previously established humanist disciplines, which would allow homophile studies to be tested against historical documents in established archives. It was, it seems, most important for Legg that homophile studies be recognized by established academic scholars as a legitimate field, rather than offer an alternative, more nuanced and diverse methodological approach.

One Seamless Web – Homosexuality in History

Even with an established historiographic methodology set, there remained a question of where to begin. What historical projects should ONE undertake first? In the summer 1959 issue of the *ONE Institute Quarterly of Homophile Studies*, W. Dorr Legg attempted to offer a beginning path for historical research in his essay "Homosexuality in History."[19] Interestingly, Legg largely reverts back to the use of homosexual over homophile in this essay, perhaps reflecting ONE's ultimate decision to work within established disciplinary paradigms and the difficulty of changing a term that had become so deeply imbedded in 1950s culture. Beginning with the statement "Homosexuality is known to have occurred as far back as recorded history goes," Legg established that the project of homophile history will be a project of recovery – to reach into past events and

[19] Legg subtitled the essay "Introductory Chapter for a Proposed Textbook." However, Legg never published the intended volume.

past histories in order to shed light on issues around homosexuality that, according to Legg, were always there (93). Yet, with so many types of historical research projects to choose from, a necessary first step is deciding which approach would best serve the emerging discipline of homophile studies. Here, Legg reviewed a number of approaches to history before turning his attention to some of the larger issues in conducting historical research. The review is extensive. From the oldest extant historical records through the American Civil War, Legg covered philosophies of history from ecology to economy and from evolution to existentialism. The intention behind the theoretical review is twofold: it offers a variety of options that could potentially be applied to the emerging field of homophile studies, while at the same time attempting to show "how it has happened that historians have so largely ignored homosexuality in even their most microscopic delvings" (93). Legg broadly identifies five unique approaches to historical research: religious/theological, humanism, histories of Great Men (and Women), historicism, and historical relativism.

He began, first, by broadly dismissing religious and other theological approaches to history – at first giving no detailed reason beyond their being impractical. Why does Legg do this and how does this shape ONE's homophile historiography? In his review of historiographic methodologies, Legg cites the work of St. Augustine of Hippo, Paul Tillich, Christopher Dawson, and Arnold Toynbee as examples of religious or theological histories. These types of histories see "divine intervention in all events" (93). By declaring the theological approach to homophile history as impractical, Legg seems to suggest that the actions of historical figures, at least when it comes to homosexuals, were

not inspired by the Divine – perhaps responding to the negatively held attitudes against homosexuality by organized religions.[20] Legg may also be suggesting that the Divine is not the only motivator of man – historians must also account for what Legg, following Freud, calls "sexual determinism," or a sexual-based drive that motivates humans to act. Perhaps it is a bit of both. Regardless of the reasoning behind Legg's dismissal of religious or theological histories, Legg removes the possibility of dealing with the spiritual when writing homophile histories. Thus, in the disciplinary break-down of the ONE Institute's programming, religion is ahistorical, relegated to its own separate discipline.

Humanism is also seen as insufficient to Legg, along with all historical methodologies he sees as teleological. Unlike the other methodologies he describes, Legg gives no definition for how he understands humanism. He notes that humanism emerged in the Italian Renaissance and can be seen in the work of such scholars as Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini. In later years, the humanist torch would be picked up by the likes of Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), Edward Gibbon, Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Adam Smith, Henry Thomas Buckle, Karl Marx, and Gordon Childe, among others. That each of these individuals tackles historiography in such disparate ways, further begs the question of how Legg defined humanism. If anything resembling a definition can be deduced from Legg's description of humanism, it is that it seems to be a methodology that examines specific, isolated

[20] Founded in Los Angeles by Reverend Troy Perry in 1968, The Metropolitan Community Church was one of the first religious fellowships in the United States to positively address the needs of LGBT people. It has since become an international church with over 250 congregations. See Faderman & Timmons (2006), 162-168.

aspects (or sub-disciplines) of the human experience – separated from other aspects of historical influence. Examples of such sub-disciplines would include, for example, economic, evolutionary, anthropological, sociological, and psychoanalytical histories. Why would Legg see humanism as impractical to the homophile historiographic project? Similar to theological histories, Legg argued that humanism does not account for the importance of sexual drive when examining the actions of men. Suggesting, for example, that economic motives for action as described by Marx, by and large, are rooted in sexual drives ("However shocking economic determinists may find this, modern scientific views of man may yet compel the conclusion that a theory of sexual determinism is more realistic historiography than any devised in the nineteenth century"), Legg goes so far as to predict that such historical studies of the battle of Austerlitz or of class struggles in the times of Augustus will be seen as frivolous, "to be classified, alongside medieval theological exercises, as being not relevant for one seriously seeking an understanding of the human condition" (95). Thus, Legg's central concern against humanist historiography seems to be the analysis of historical events from a singular lens – focusing, for example, only on economics rather than other possible contributing factors. Legg is clearly walking a fine line. While not exactly advocating a historiography of sexual determinism, he is also saying that of all the historiographies of this genre – economic, theological, agricultural, etc. – sexual determinism is the most all encompassing of them. Psychoanalytical research by the 1950s seemed to support the famous quote from Oscar Wilde that "everything in the world is about sex except sex. Sex is about power." Thus,

for Legg, one of the most central motivating factors in the history of humanity has been sex.

A historical study of "Great Men (and Women)" who were homosexuals – many of whom (such as Plato, Alexander the Great, Leonardo da Vinci, Niccolò Machiavelli, et cetera), have become heroes of heterosexual histories – would "certainly be both readable and racy, perhaps something of an intellectual bombshell" (95). However, Legg dismisses the idea of writing a grand history of famous homosexuals as presumptuous, given the nascent state of the field of homophile studies. While the general student of history "has available to him the rich resources of many centuries of careful historiographic research," "beginnings have scarcely yet been made" in the field of homophile history (95). What distinguishes this historiographic methodology from the others Legg lists is that it is the only methodology that he approves of, but for which he argues society is not yet ready – highlighting once again that Legg's debate on historiographic method is not just about practical scholarship, but about strategic politics and positionality. Homophile historiography cannot, at least at first, dramatically challenge established, heteronormative histories, for fear that such a historical project would further alienate homosexuals from mainstream society. Such a statement is remarkable for the time. At a moment in the nascent, formative stages of the homophile movement when there were many possibilities of offering more radical and inclusive alternatives to dominant paradigms, Legg's intervention contributes to the shaping of what the homophile movement would become. Here, we see him carefully eliminating certain possibilities in favor of choices that he feels are the most politically advantageous and practically

manageable – choices which are ultimately directed toward encouraging the homosexual's assimilation into mainstream society. This project of assimilation, which can be seen forming in Legg's article, would become the foundational mission of the homophile movement through the radical liberationist movements in the 1970s. The result, of course, is that the homophile project adopts the exclusionary practices that focus on white men of privilege. An example of this mentality can be found in Legg's use of the term "Great Men (and Women)" which reduces half of the population to a parenthetical and suggests that Great Women are somehow less likely or less important to the homophile project. As I discuss in the following chapter on the Lesbian Herstory Archives, histories of lesbian women, lesbians and gays of color, and the economically poor would have their own debates on historiographic methodologies – weighing whether it is important or even desirable to participate in scholastic conversations that have historically excluded and denigrated them.

In the last part of the article, Legg ultimately argued for what he saw as a methodological approach somewhere between the historicism of Gottfried Herder, Leopold von Ranke, Lord John Edward Acton, and Benedetto Croce, and the historical relativism of José Ortega y Gasset, Wilhelm Dilthey, and John Dewey. He wrote that these methodologies reflect an approach to history that is "nothing less than the examination of human life in its totality and multiplicity" (historicism) through the specific, compounding studies of particular historical periods, or "problems, principally in the light of its own configuration, as a gestalt, or whole" (historical relativism) (94). Legg suggested that these approaches are particularly appealing "in deference to western

and particularly American tastes" (95). Indeed, in the 1950s, many American historians working at colleges and universities were engaged in a heated debate over the merits of historical relativism over historicism – a debate deftly described in Peter Novick's extensive history of the American historical profession, *That Noble Dream*, and to which I refer to in my introduction to this dissertation. Merritt Thompson would have certainly been aware of this debate, and while his clear affinity for Dewey would have likely landed Thompson squarely in the historical relativist camp, Legg's suggestion that homophile historiography could somehow blend these two different methodologies suggests that once again Legg was trying to politically hedge his bets. In light of the exclusions of religious and humanist histories, it can also be deduced that Legg found historicism and historical relativism more appealing because they allowed for an approach to history that could include a variety of factors beyond the Divine, the economic, the psychoanalytical, etc. Namely, they allowed sexual determinism to be included – and since historicism and historical relativism were, as Legg noted, the appealing "western and particularly American tastes" in the post-war period, these two methodologies would allow discussions of homosexuality to enter into historical narratives without being perceived as a major threat to the academic establishment.

On the one hand, historical relativism posits that a historical event can only be understood on its own terms. As I described earlier in the theories of John Dewey that Thompson brought to ONE, historical relativism favors the experience of the individual – rejecting the belief that there is one, singular truth of history in favor of a multitude of truths that stem from the experiences of many. Such an approach applied to homophile

history would have to take into account, for example, that Renaissance references to "sodomy" and "buggery" are not equivalents to homosexuality as it is understood in the 1950s, but must be examined within the specific contexts of that period. This, ultimately, is not the route Legg would take at ONE, nor would it gain traction in the academy for a few more decades to come. With the Cold War in full force, Americans overwhelmingly took comfort in the absolute truths and national identity historicism could offer.

Historicism emerged in the wake of the 1789 revolution in France and the Napoleonic conquests, when early nineteenth-century European historians sought a way of writing and understanding history with the same sense of authority and verifiable accuracy as the sciences. As I mentioned in the introduction, German historian Leopold von Ranke led this movement, arguing that the job of the historian is to create a trustworthy reconstruction of the past using objects (primarily documents) as data/evidence. The primacy of the document gave history the legitimacy of science by endowing it with the faith it would accurately reflect the past, and the archive – which would house and order these important documents – would become the historian's all-important laboratory. As Peter Novick pointed out in *That Noble Dream*, Ranke's philosophies became the bedrock of American historicism, which would dominate the historical profession in the United States for decades.

Ranke's historicist approach offered homophile studies an established historical methodology that would support its mission to create a stronger homophile identity, and thus a stable, legitimate place in society for the homosexual. Just as historicism helped to establish a sense of French national identity following the Revolution by giving it a

documented and verifiable past, historicism under ONE would establish an identity around homosexuality by creating an archive of historical materials that would support such an identity's past. Yet, Legg recognized that historicism posed several challenges for the homophile historian. How, for example, can the term homosexual equally be attributed to Oscar Wilde, "a well-known homosexual, yet a husband and father," Marie Antoinette, "also married and a mother, who had considerable homosexual experience," and Aristotle, "whose homosexuality may have been either sporadic or short-lived" (Legg 1959; 96). Given Legg's previously stated articulation of the challenges of terminology, how do would-be homophile historians address questions of terminology, definitions and translations? Legg offers no solution, suggesting that, while he recognizes these questions as important to the field, he must "bypass the question of definitions for the time being" and simply deal with studies of individuals and groups who are known "to have considerable homosexual experience" (96). Still, Legg insists, the historian should be acutely aware of "loaded" words and phrases, whose language conceals homosexual meaning. As an example, Legg notes that the use of 'loins' and 'thighs,' when appropriately translated, "throw much light on attitudes toward homosexuality among the early Hebrews" (96).

Legg's description of homophile historiography and its limitations cannot be underestimated, as it became the dominant practice of gay and lesbian historiography for the next three decades with even longer-lasting implications for LGBT archives. Legg expressly understands how existing historiographic methodologies fail to capture the nuance of human sexuality – that a historicist approach to homophile history requires

terms like “loins” and “thighs” to be flattened into terms like “homosexual” and “gay.” Yet, in spite of this recognition, Legg fails to realize that the profusion of terms to describe same-sex sexuality over history suggests a multitude of ways of understanding human sexuality. The inability to capture an ‘essence’ of human sexuality into a single term suggests that such an essence does not, in fact, exist - despite familiar and unfamiliar markers of same-sex desire expressed in different times and spaces. Legg’s articulation of a historicist homophile historiography assumes that terms like homosexual can be applied to individuals and events through a teleological chronology of history (what Legg refers to as ‘one great historical continuum’). It is true that Legg recognizes homosexual is an unstable, inaccurate term, yet, in practice, he acknowledges that he cannot imagine another way to write the histories of homophile studies. He follows Merritt Thompson’s advice to “define your terms,” even when the terms are fluid. Legg is also aware that having a multitude of ways of understanding human sexuality is not politically advantageous at a time when members of ONE are seeking to create a collective sense of identity among homosexuals by establishing a shared history.

It would be easy to simply dismiss ONE’s approach as reductive and inaccurate. What I want to stress, though, is the central place Legg’s articulations of methodology and approach had/has in helping to form a collective identity by stressing homosexuality’s presence throughout history, in every culture, class, and profession, around the world, across time and space. This was not the dominantly held belief, and at the time of ONE’s founding, history had not seen homosexuality in this way – in the rare instances when history had seen homosexuality at all. ONE would need to write these

histories themselves, with the expressed mission of revealing the homosexual's presence in history and, in turn, revealing the ways historians have actively concealed the homosexual from earlier studies. Once ONE established the basic parameters, definitions and approaches to homophile studies – history, biology, psychology, law, anthropology, sociology, religion, philosophy, and art and literature – the ONE Institute needed an archive to draw from. The ONE Archive would serve several purposes. It would be a repository of sources used in the Institute's teaching and research; it would legitimize Homophile Studies as a discipline, materially proving that homosexuals had existed throughout history; and it would model the way of thinking about homosexuality that the institute was trying to teach.

Pasts and Presents: Jim Kepner and the Founding of the ONE Archive

It is no coincidence, then, that the ONE Institute and the ONE Archive were founded simultaneously. The archive began with a few boxes of books and ONE's organizational records stored behind couches and in closets of the homes of ONE committee members. In 1956, the ONE Institute's Jim Kepner recommended ONE rent an additional room to house the growing archive, and in return, he would donate over four hundred books from his personal collection.

An archivist's collection speaks volumes about the person who collected and organized it, and vice versa. Jim Kepner was born in 1923 and was believed to be from Galveston, Texas. In September of that year, according to his obituary, he was found under a bush, wrapped in newspaper. He wasn't told he was adopted until he was

nineteen, when his adoptive father brought him to San Francisco to live. Kepner's collecting began in 1942, when the 19 year-old went to the San Francisco Public Library in search of texts that would help explain his interest in other men. He found very little there and decided if he was going to learn anything, he'd have to start his own collection. Searching the city's used bookstores, Kepner found a number of volumes that directly or indirectly related to same-sex desire, and slowly amassed a substantial collection from money he saved working various jobs in factories, newspapers and as a taxi-driver. The first item in his collection was the most widely-available book dealing with same-sex relationships at the time, Radclyffe Hall's lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness*.

An avid collector of both homosexual material and science-fiction/fantasy novels, Kepner's interest reflected a common theme among many of ONE's members – an idealized, utopic vision of the future. Kepner could identify with many of the heroes of the novels he read. Like Superman or Batman, Kepner was orphaned at a young age, had become detached from his family/people, and had a secret identity that he had to carefully guard. In 1951, he moved to Los Angeles where he soon became involved with the Mattachine Society - and soon after, ONE. Kepner became a frequent contributor to ONE magazine, and when the ONE Institute began, he became one of the school's most active students and teachers. In the early years, despite the size of Kepner's collection, the archive was run by Donald Slater, who was a librarian by training, though Kepner remained active in building the archive's holdings. Kepner would leave ONE in 1961 due to political infighting that preceded the schism that separated the organization. Disappointed in the loss of the collection, Kepner began collecting again, and by 1971,

when his Hollywood apartment was filled nearly to capacity, he began welcoming researchers to his home – which he called the Western Gay Archives. He would later rent a storefront space in Hollywood and change the name to the National Gay Archives, and then later to the International Gay and Lesbian Archives, as the scope of his collection grew. By 1994, following the death of W. Dorr Legg, Kepner agreed to merge his archive with the existing ONE Institute that Legg had continued following the schism, and in that way, Kepner's collection once again became the cornerstone of ONE's archive. In 2000, the University of Southern California provided a small building to house the ONE Archive. The archive was ultimately donated to the USC Libraries in October, 2010.

As I mentioned at the start of this chapter, what remains of the early 1950s ONE archive is a partial list of the first five hundred books in the collection, now incorporated into the Vern and Nancy Bullough Collection on Sex and Gender at California State University Northridge. Kepner's original donation to ONE in 1956 formed the core of his non-fiction collection. Examining the list reveals what seems like a veritable hodge-podge of sources – 19th century German psychology studies, Joseph McCabe's *History of Life and Morals in Greece and Rome*, Shakespeare's *Edward II*, religious tracts on the sins of Sodom, biographies of Joan of Arc and Oscar Wilde, etc. These books were not uncommon. Many of the recent tracts could be found in local church libraries and homes. The classical histories and psychology studies could be checked out from public and academic libraries. The biographies and plays could have certainly been purchased in any major bookstore. Yet, brought together by ONE in their archive of homophile studies, the materials are given new meaning. Thus, Edward II is claimed as a tragic homosexual, and

the play, when read along side some of Shakespeare's sonnets, suggest the famous bard himself was a homosexual. The life and morals of Greece and Roman reveal to ONE scholars that, if read in accurate translations, some of the greatest leaders and philosophers of antiquity – held in such high regard by Western civilization – engaged in sexual relationships with other men or young boys, and thus could also be claimed as homosexual. Joan of Arc – the enigmatic heroine of France – was a strong, independent, unmarried woman with an affinity towards wearing male clothing, which was strong enough evidence for ONE to claim her as a lesbian.[21] The religious tracts against sodomy not only proved the historical presence of homosexuals (sodomites, here, equated with homosexuals), they also demonstrated the historical persecution of homosexuality – even though sodomy was a broad term where, depending on the time, space, and circumstance it was being used, it accounted for everything from bestiality to inhospitality towards one's neighbors.

Reflecting on both the content and the classification of the ONE Archive, classified under the various expressed sub-disciplines of homophile studies – sociology, history, religion, etc. – it is possible to see how ONE's collections practices reflect Rankian historicism and modernist methodologies. Michel de Certeau notes that modernist histories begin "with the gesture of setting aside, of putting together, of transforming certain classified objects into documents" (1988, 72). This gesture is a form of cultural re-distribution, stripping objects of their original purpose and contexts to form new sets of data, while also assigning to them the limitations of how and to what purpose

[21] Kepner later wrote that his active attempts at collecting lesbian history often included documenting "independent women even when there was no evidence they'd had sex with other women (few left such evidence around)." (Kepner 1998, 181)

that data will be used. In this way, the ONE Archive became an important locus for thinking about how a history of homosexuality could be written. Through its collection and classification, ONE could suggest, for example, that such disparate subjects as the kinaidos of Ancient Greece and the life of Saint Joan of Arc were connected, and helped give meaning and legitimacy to the emergent homosexual minority.

And yet, the ONE archive also reveals the slippage that necessarily exists in every archive. The historicist approach laid out by Legg in his essay on methodologies insists on a Rankian concept of history as a provable, factual science. The archive is the laboratory where evidence is tested against the weight of truth. But let us not forget the influence of John Dewey through Merritt Thompson on this archive, which emphasizes the importance of individual experience. The "Truth" of Rankian historicism, in any archive, is constructed by a series of choices and available materials made by archivists and donors over time. Histories are written using materials from an archive, and what exists in an archive depends on the economics and personal interests of the archival staff. The bulk of the ONE archive was, and continues to be, made from donations of personal collections like Kepner's, and the bulk of these donations were from gay white men. ONE had a collections policy aimed toward representing the diversity of homosexuals that included an attention toward gender, race and class. But faced with the constraints of a limited staff and a small budget, the archive took what homosexual-adjacent material it had access to. The majority of women involved with ONE in the beginning quickly became discouraged by the sexist exclusions of the men and left the organization to form

separate groups.[22] ONE also had policies to ensure a diverse advisory board, originally stipulating, for example, that the nine-member board would have to have at least three women, and at least one board member should be African-American, one should be Asian-American and one "should be a member of another racial or ethnic group" (White 2009, 34). However, these policies were never fully realized. The board was never this diverse. And one of the results of this is that ONE Archive's holdings reflected the perception of homosexual identity held by a select few gay white men who had the means and access to procure, donate, and interpret the collection's materials. It also meant many of the Institute's first students were gay white men, and many of its first research studies focused on male homosexuality in Western society. Despite the advisory board's awareness that their work did not reflect the diversity of homosexuals as they saw it, there seems to have been a belief that these were the necessary preliminary conditions of establishing the discipline of homophile studies, and that a more nuanced collection would come with time and, hopefully, greater resources. Meanwhile, they argued the research and collections work that they were conducting was an important and necessary start.

I am not interested in criticizing ONE's lack of inclusivity, or offering justifications for its shortcomings. What is interesting is how these shortcomings form the foundations of homophile, and later GLBT, studies. ONE sought to construct, legitimize and circulate the homophile as a collective, historically universal, politically and socially constituted, cultural minority – and they did this based on their own personal

[22] One of the first and most enduring of these organizations to be formed by former members of ONE was the Daughters of Bilitis.

understandings of their own sexuality. The ability to see a homosexual in Ancient Greece, for example, meant that Legg saw something of himself in that history – an awareness of certain actions and behaviors in the past that he identified with in the present. To suggest that ONE failed in fully representing the diversity of homosexuality hinges on the belief that there was, or could be, a fully accurate representation of homosexual identity that is achievable. While it is true that ONE could have more materials that reflect more people from more backgrounds, it is possible that such a proposition falls into the modernist trap that the more an archive acquires, the closer it is to a knowable 'truth.' Thus, rather than thinking of the ONE Archive – or any archive, for that matter – as being able to (or failing to) represent the diversity of sexual identity, I propose that it is more productive to examine how the archive implicitly and explicitly creates particular understandings of sexual identity through its acquisitions, classification, and in some cases, interpretative practices. Rather than seeing archival collections as being capable of accurately representing the past, they can be seen as reflections of the desires and intentions of those who create and use them.

Chapter II

The Archive as Hospitable Home: The Lesbian Herstory Archives

"My archival self has been formed by my experience of degradation, sexual exuberance, and the dignity of resistance in the Greenwich Village policed bars of the '50s, by my reading of Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi in the 1960s when I started teaching students from colonized backgrounds in the first open enrollment program of the City University of New York, by my involvement in the American civil rights movements, anti-war movements, and gay liberation movements, and even before I learned the life-giving existence of counter-narratives to the nationally assumed…. My home was a public gathering place for those who needed information, solace, material for creation, connections of all kinds, planning political actions as well as films, books, and theater. The archival space now seems to me that place where the private becomes a public shadow. The place of uncontained conversations."

- Joan Nestle, Co-Founder of the LHA

In the period following the Stonewall riots in 1969, homosexuals were increasingly recognized as a political constituency in the United States and Canada. Major cities and even some smaller ones often had several organizations responding to the various social and political needs and desires of the local lesbian and gay communities. Openly gay and lesbian politicians were being elected to public office for the first time.[23] City Councils were passing local ordinances protecting the civil rights of lesbian and gay citizens. Marches, demonstrations, and an increased presence in popular media brought lesbian and gay life to the broader public. Social and institutional attitudes

[23] When Nancy Wechsler and Jerry DeGrieck came out after being elected to the city council of Ann Arbor, Michigan, they were considered the first openly lesbian and gay individuals to serve in a public office. A year later, Wechsler decided not to run for re-election and was replaced by openly lesbian candidate Kathy Kozachenko, becoming one of the first openly lesbian individuals to be elected to a public office. Allan Spear was elected to the Minnesota State Legislature in 1972 and came out in 1974. He would go on to serve in the state House and Senate till 2001. Elaine Noble was the first openly gay individual to be elected to state office when she became a member of the Massachussets House of Representatives in 1974.

toward homosexuality were changing rapidly, and there was growing concern among some gay and lesbian political organizations about how to document and preserve the work they were doing. There was a realization that what they were doing was historic, and, if not properly documented, individual organizations' contributions would go unrecognized. Saving materials relating to these early political movements also could be used as a resource for future activist work. Much of the archival work being done during this period was happening at the über-local level – people's living rooms and closets, filing cabinets in an individual organization's office, etc. – without a plan for long-term preservation or short-term accessibility. Many historians of the post-Stonewall period frequently note the constant in-fighting among lesbian and gay activists over the various directions the movements could take, but none have really examined the battle over archives and the ways lesbian and gay histories would be written. While ONE had established basic principles for understanding and claiming homosexuality within the context of homophile studies and academic disciplines, lesbian and gay liberation movements were generally leery of institutions and academic establishments.

Two articles in the 1979 issue of the *Gay Insurgent* capture two opposing views on grassroots archiving in the gay and lesbian communities, both directed at the individuals who were undertaking this work. The first article was by Jim Monahan, a Chicago-based archivist, member of the Gay Academic Union, and a follower of the kind of assimilationist model established by the ONE Archive. Articulating the most pressing concerns for gay and lesbian archives, Monahan argued that chief among them was the need to secure the materials and make them accessible for serious scholarship.

Collections were largely located in homes and small offices across the country, leaving the materials unprotected in the long term. Monahan was particularly concerned by the 1977 police raids at the Toronto offices of *The Body Politic*. Founded in 1971, *The Body Politic* was one of Canada's leading gay and lesbian news magazines. In 1973, the editorial board of *The Body Politic* opened what was then known as the Canadian Gay Liberation Movement Archives (CGLMA) within their cramped offices on Temperance Street in downtown Toronto.[24] In December, 1977, members of a Toronto pornography vice squad known as "Operation P" raided the offices and archives, removing over 12 crates of materials. Monahan felt strongly that gay and lesbian archives were not safe in private hands. Vandalism and police raids on homes and organization offices put collections in danger. In his article, he advocated working with established archives and libraries to develop collections in gay and lesbian studies. Materials would be better protected and preserved for the long-term and would allow greater accessibility to scholars working across disciplines. Access to these collections, Monahan argued, would have to be limited. "Vandalism, under the best of circumstances, has reached pandemic proportions in libraries and archives in general. Gay materials would only invite angels of retribution" (9). Access would need to be granted by the repository upon application, with researchers giving evidence of membership in a gay organization, appointment at an academic institution, approval from the donor of a collection, or student status at an accredited institution if the student had a letter of support from an instructor. Ironically, Monahan argues that in spite of these limitations, legitimate scholars would have greater

[24] The archives were renamed the Canadian Gay Archives in 1975, and were renamed the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives in 1993.

access to the material because they will be located in places where established research is already being conducted – a point that follows W. Dorr Legg's argument on the legitimacy of academia. Monahan concluded his essay arguing against the 'ghettoization' of gay archives, saying that "to remain separate, both physically and intellectually from general history is to cultivate parochialism" (8). Such parochialism, Monahan argued, would leave gay studies to "faddish chance, to exist in once-in-a-while course offerings passing from existence as the fad and instructors pass."

Joan Nestle, founding member of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York, wrote the second article in the *Gay Insurgent* as a direct response to Monahan. "The Lesbian Herstory Archives contradicts almost all the main points of Jim Monahan's article," she wrote, "but this is not surprising because the experience giving birth to the conceptions is very different" (10). Calling both 'historical understandings' and 'academic institutions' failed terms, she argued in favor of lesbian and gay archives staying within the communities they serve and represent, not out of parochialism, but out of a sense that history is the tool that individuals can use to come into consciousness of themselves as part of a community. Academic institutions had denied the histories and herstories of gays and lesbians, and asking "the patriarchal destroyer to preserve is a suicidal act" (10).

The Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) was born out of that desire Nestle spoke of, to seek a sense of self through history, and since its founding in the early 1970s it continues to serve as one of the country's oldest continually operating archives relating to sexual identity. For Nestle and the other founders of the LHA, the homophile model of

archiving articulated by W. Dorr Legg and Jim Kepner of the ONE Institute and Archives re-inscribed patriarchal systems of oppression by locating homosexual themes in the dominant narratives of the various disciplines of academia. ONE's model focused on the acceptance of homosexuality within the academy, which they hoped would expand into acceptance by society at large. The LHA, however, focused its attention on the individual within the context of a community. In their vision, you did not come to the institutional archive as a scholar conducting research. You came to a home as a person hungry to understand who you are and where you fit within a society where you do not see yourself visibly represented.

The LHA's understanding of the archive as home is both literal and figurative. The archive has always been located within a residence, and the archive's by-laws stipulate that a lesbian must always live onsite to offer a living context for the collections. The idea of an archive-as-home also extends to the hospitality volunteers show towards guests, and the sharing of history is regularly described by Nestle and the LHA staff as an act of familial, inter-generational engagement. The gesture of preserving materials in an archive is referred to as "an act of mothering" (Nestle 1979, 11). The "home" of the archive is both public and private, a space where secrecy, sexuality, and shame are graciously shared with visiting strangers. "The archival space now seems to me," said Nestle, "that place where the private becomes a public shadow. The place of uncontained conversations" (Nestle 2014). Within the boxes that form the archive's collection are the private thoughts and desires, the intimate moments of sexual expression, the secrets kept from relatives that are now accessible in semi-public ways. This chapter explores the

concept of the archive as home within the context of the LHA, teasing out the relationships between public and private that are at the core of this archive's radical reimagining of the function and practice of an archive within a community.

Few other LGBT archives have had the longevity and stability of the Lesbian Herstory Archives. Since it began receiving visitors in 1975, much has been written *using* the collections and much has been written *about* the collections. The archive has been able to publish its own narratives through the various collected writings of Joan Nestle, as well as the nineteen Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletters that have been published for free since 1975.[25] The newsletters included updates on the work of the archives, new acquisitions, extensive bibliographies of Lesbian literature, transcripts of oral histories, letter requests from researchers seeking information they couldn't find in the archives, original poetry and artwork, suggestions for preserving their own archive-worthy materials, and much more. All of this has shaped the way the LHA has been perceived by volunteers and the visiting public. Several anthologies of literature, poetry, diaries, letters, and news articles – such as Sonya Jones' *Gay and Lesbian Literature Since World War II* (1998), Julia Penelope's *Lesbian Culture* (1993), and Arden Eversmeyer's *A Gift of Age: Old Lesbian Life Stories* (2009) – have been published using the source material found at the LHA. Ronnie Walker (1990) and Polly Thistlethwaite (1997), both volunteers at the archives, wrote doctoral dissertations documenting the history of the LHA and its unique lesbian feminist approach to archiving. Thistlethwaite also contributed a chapter about the LHA in James Carmichael's anthology *Daring to Find Our Names: The Search for Lesbigay Library History* (1998), in which she articulates

[25] The LHA published its most recent newsletter in the spring of 2004.

some of the challenges the archive has faced when competing against larger, more visible institutions like the New York Public Library. In *An Archive of Feelings* (2003), Ann Cvetkovich uses the Lesbian Herstory Archives as one of several archival sites to theorize trauma, and to argue the importance of archiving accounts of sexual trauma as both ordinary and catastrophic allows for a more sex-positive approach toward moving through the range of feelings associated with such traumas. Lisa Duggan frequently refers to the LHA in her 1986 essay "History's Gay Ghetto," as an example of how gay and lesbian archives straddle academic and community-based research practices while existing as communities under social and political attack. The first third of the 1994 film documentary *Not Just Passing Through* details the work of the LHA and, through interviews with community members, the personal impact it has had on various individual lives. Similarly, a film documentary on the life and work of Joan Nestle, *Hand on the Pulse* (2002), articulates the central role the archives had in her life for nearly forty years. Central to this chapter is the voice of Joan Nestle. Not only was Nestle the first and longest residential caretaker of the archives, she wrote many of the founding documents that still govern the archive's management, as well as articles interpreting their work for the general public. This chapter uses all of these sources as well as my own visit to the Lesbian Herstory Archives in 2012, to articulate the unique ways this home to lesbian memories blurs the boundaries between public and private space as a way of creating social families in the present.

I begin this chapter detailing the formal founding of the archive in Nestle's Upper West Side apartment, unpacking the self-articulated principals of the archive. From that

UWS apartment to a brownstone in Brooklyn's Park Slope neighborhood, I use feminist theory to explain the importance of home and family within the context of 1970s lesbian feminist discourse and explore how these concepts were implemented practically within the public/private space of the archive/home. From my discussion on home and family, I use recent critical theory on hospitality to describe an alternative mode of creating and transmitting archival knowledge than the institutional mode of archives like ONE. The institutional model approach requires a level of distance between the researcher and the subject, which allows it to be critically studied. The LHA's performance of hospitality ensures that any engagement with the archive – whether as a volunteer or as a member of the public – is a social practice. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of LHA's work today, calling into question the long-term normative expectations of a community framed within the context of home and family at a time when lesbian and gay youth are increasingly refusing labels of identity.

Founding the Archives

The Lesbian Herstory Archives owe many of its founding principals to the lesbian feminist movements, which emerged from the lesbian and gay liberation movements and 1960s second wave feminism. While women's and gay right's movements were finding their voice in the 1960s, lesbians struggled with exclusion on both fronts. Women who joined gay homophile or liberation organizations confronted sexism and hostility. In some cases, men in these organizations replicated sexist behaviors occurring in heterosexual households across the country – expecting women to provide refreshments

and perhaps take meeting minutes, but otherwise leaving the "real work" to the men (*After Stonewall* 1999). Lesbians also found hostility within mainstream feminist movements. Many heterosexual feminists resented the stereotype that all feminists were lesbians and accused them of coopting the feminist movement for their own agenda. Betty Friedan, president of the National Organization for Women (NOW) famously referred to lesbian activists as a "lavender menace," and in a 1970 press statement she accused lesbians of trying to divide the movement from within (Warner x). Without a political "home" in either the gay rights or feminist movements, many lesbians broke away to create a separate movement, inspired by the work of each group but focusing on issues directly related to their own cause. For example, a group of women from NOW responded directly to Friedan's attacks by forming a collective the same year, originally calling themselves the "Lavender Menace" and later renaming themselves the "Radicalesbians." In 1970, the group published one of the first articulations of lesbian feminist politics in their manifesto *The Woman-Identified Woman*, and soon after others followed, including Village Voice journalist Jill Johnston's book *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* and Anne Koedt's *Radical Feminism*, both published in 1973. All of these works sought to establish the centrality of sexuality within feminist theory and practice, drawing on the movement's politicization of domesticity and family structures. Johnston's book urged women to reject feminine behaviors, to be aggressive in the pursuit of sexual pleasure, and to refuse monogamy, which she argued is a kind of domestic slavery. Koedt contributed to the discussion of the politicization of sex by arguing against pornography, penetrative stimulation, and other "male-stream"

activities.[26] A set of aesthetics were adopted by lesbian feminists – particularly younger urban women – with the intention of rejecting femininity, classism and materialist consumption. This style was marked by short hair, second-hand clothing, jeans, work boots, and plaid shirts. Lesbian feminists adamantly rejected butch-femme culture, a mainstay of lesbian culture for decades, arguing that it perpetuated relationship structures where women were placed in either feminine passive or masculine patriarchal roles (Chenier 2004). This newly developing movement offered a coherent, visible political movement by and for lesbian women for the first time, but such regimentation was, in many ways, a rejection of the lesbian cultures that had developed over the previous decades. It was a rejection that separated many older lesbian women who had come out in the mid-1960s and earlier from women who were finding their home within lesbian feminism.

Joan Nestle and others like her who had come out in the 1950s, now had to contend with hostilities from younger lesbians, in addition to the hostilities from society at large, and her frustration brought her to the Gay Academic Union. In March, 1973, Joan Nestle met informally with seven men – college faculty, graduate students, a writer and a director – in an apartment in Manhattan to discuss the challenges faced by gay academics. While the exact identities of all eight individuals has never been made public, John D'Emilio – who was one of the eight, and a graduate student in history at Columbia University at the time – described what would become the founding of the Gay Academic

[26] See her essay "The Myth of Vaginal Orgasm" in the anthology *Radical Feminism* (New York: Quadrangle, 1973).

Union (GAU) in that organization's published proceedings.[27] Faced with similar experiences – challenges gaining administrative approval for teaching gay-related courses, difficulties in establishing research methodologies, trouble locating source materials, etc. – the group agreed to pursue hosting an academic conference of gay and lesbian academics. The first conference was held over Thanksgiving weekend in 1973 at CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice on the theme of "Universities and the Gay Experience." Keynote addresses were given by activist Barbara Gittings, who had recently helped successfully petition the American Psychological Association to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders, and Martin Duberman, who was, at the time, Distinguished Professor of History at CUNY's Lehman College. A Women's Caucus was formed at this first conference of the GAU to ensure that the voices of women would be heard and that issues directly pertaining to lesbians in academia could be discussed. During a consciousness-raising session, the Women's Caucus split into two groups, and one of the groups – which included Nestle, Sahli Cavallaro, Deborah Edel, Pamela Oline, and Julia Stanley – focused their conversation on the need to establish a lesbian-focused archive.

These women came from a variety of backgrounds. Nestle was considered among the group to be of the old guard – a lesbian who didn't come out in her thirties because there was a movement that encouraged it, but a woman who had lived as a lesbian during the less-supportive periods of the '50s and 60's. At the time, she was teaching classes on literature and colonialism at Queens College to largely first-generation immigrants. Sahli

[27] D'Emilio's account of the founding of the GAU – one of the few such accounts ever printed – can be found in his anthology *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992)

Cavallaro was an active member of the GAU Women's Caucus, a peer counselor for those struggling with their identity, and a graduate student in psychology and poetry. Deborah Edel was an educational psychologist by training, and worked for many years at a private Quaker school with children who had learning disabilities. Pamela Oline had recently become active in the lesbian feminist movement and, like Cavallaro, worked as a peer counselor. Julia Stanley, who along with Nestle had come out prior to 1969, was a philosopher, linguist and author. She had been expelled as a student from Florida State University in 1959 and the University of Miami because of her studies in lesbianism.[28]

Nestle and Stanley had been discussing the fragility of their own histories as lesbian women. Not only was it difficult to find materials relating to their experiences in mainstream libraries and archives, but the two expressed concerns about growing hostilities toward older lesbian histories even within lesbian feminist groups. By 1973, many lesbian feminists looked to their predecessors as victims (or worse, collaborators) of the heterosexual patriarchal system. The group began to articulate a vision of a lesbian-focused archive that would document the experiences of all women who expressed a desire or love for other women, in whatever form that took. Such a policy would begin reconciling the pre-Stonewall lesbians with the younger lesbian feminist lesbians. The archive would demonstrate that both groups could work together, and perhaps more importantly, could learn from one another.

Their vision became the basis of a list of "Notes on Radical Archiving from a Lesbian Feminist Perspective," first published several years later in 1979 by Joan Nestle in the *Gay Insurgent* debate with Jim Monahan that opens this chapter. The notes are a

[28] Brief biographies of the LHA founders appear in the first newsletter in June, 1975.

diplomatic achievement – modeling the newer lesbian feminist theories without dismissing the lives and the labors of the women who came before. In publishing it, Nestle uses the framework for the Lesbian Herstory Archives as a way of encouraging others to think about archiving outside the academic model. Nestle argued that to archive as Monahan suggested, patriarchal systems of hierarchy, exclusion and limited accessibility would be re-inscribed on the emerging radical lesbian and gay movements. Speaking directly to gay and lesbian historians and archivists, Nestle offered a list that reflected the principles that the Lesbian Herstory Archives had developed over the previous six years, and which continue to guide the archive today.

1. The archives must serve the needs of the Lesbian people
    a. All lesbian women must have access to the archives: no credentials for usage or inclusion; race and class must be no barrier.
    b. The archives should be housed within the community, not on an academic campus that is by definition closed to many women. The archives should share the political and cultural world of its people and not be located in an isolated building that continues to exist while the community dies. If necessary the archives will go underground with its people to be cherished in hidden places until the community is safe.
    c. The archives should be involved in the political struggles of the Lesbian people, a place where ideas and experiences from the past interact with the living issues of the Lesbian community.

d. The archives should be staffed by Lesbians so the collection will always have a living cultural context. Archival skills shall be taught, one generation of Lesbians to another, breaking the elitism of traditional archives.
e. The community should share in the work of the archives, contributing material, indexing, mailings, creating bibliographies and other forms of information sharing.
f. The archives will collect the prints of all our lives, not just preserve the records of the famous or the published.
g. Its atmosphere must be nourishing, entry into our archives should be entry into a caring home.
h. The works of all our artists must be preserved – our photographers, our graphic designers, our scribblers, our card makers, our silversmiths.
i. The lesbian feminist archives must refuse cooption from the patriarchal society around it even if it comes in the name of a "woman's college."
j. The collection must be kept intact and never be bartered or sold.
k. The archive is an act of mothering, of passing along to our daughters the energies, the actions, the words we lived by. It is a first step in reclaiming a place in time, our response to the colonizer who makes us live on the periphery or not at all.

2. There should be regional Lesbian Herstory Archives, preserving and gathering the records of each Lesbian community. A network can then be set up. (Nestle 1979, 11)

These notes capture many of the principals that came out of lesbian feminism: a commitment to inclusion and accessibility regardless of race and class, a fierce belief that lesbian separatism ensured accessibility and preservation, and a community-based model where knowledge of history and the labor of archiving would be shared with all of the members of the collective. These notes also introduce the concepts of family, home, and hospitality that will be the focus of the rest of this chapter.

An Act of Mothering: The Archives as Family

Central to the Lesbian Herstory Archive's philosophy of lesbianism is the figuring of sexual identity as a family. The lesbian family reflected in the archive and its operation is not an idealized, conflict-free family, but one that works through recurring disagreements for the preservation of itself. Not surprisingly, the idealized 1950s images of the nuclear family, with the father/husband at the head of the house – that paramount symbol of patriarchy and domesticity – became a target for 1970s lesbian feminists. Some theorists like Jill Johnston rejected familial bonds in favor of sexually-driven open relationships and polygamy. But some women had children from previous relationships, and many others appreciated the familiarity that comes from the family model.

In her book *Families We Choose*, Kath Weston suggests that many lesbians and gay men develop relationships that offer alternative family-like structures of support and

belonging. Weston notes that anthropology formally referred to such relationships as "fictive kinships," before it became widely accepted that all families and kinships are, in some sense, fictional – which is to say that they are understood through the meaning given to it, rather than a strictly biological connection (105). Lesbian and gay literature and social commentary are rife with personal narratives that depict biological families that shame or disown their homosexual relative, or cases where the relative must hide this part of their lives from their family out of fear. While Weston notes that there is a certain functionalism within this logic that assumes people intrinsically *need* a family, many accounts suggest that we seek out family-like kinships to affirm identity and receive emotional support (106). I want to be clear, however, that such family structures do not necessarily mimic the nuclear family. Such kinships are not necessarily hierarchical and boundaries are extremely fluid.

In some cases, lesbians and gay men grow up in non-traditional families, providing them with alternative conceptualizations of kinship structures that they can model later in life. By her own accounts, Joan Nestle grew up in such a family. She was born in 1940 to working class Jewish parents in the Bronx. Her father Jonas died shortly before she was born, "never having seen him, never having touched his body, never having heard his voice" (*Hand on the Pulse*). Her mother Regina worked a variety of jobs to support Joan, but at the age of ten they were evicted from their apartment and she went to live for a time with her aunt and uncle in Bay Side, Queens. When she would visit her mother or after she returned, there were always many different men around that she referred to as uncles. Of the many ways Regina worked to support herself and her

daughter, one was prostitution, and recognizing her mother's relationship between sex and power helped shape her own early identity and how she perceived women and families.

> In the '40s and '50s, mothers didn't talk about liking to fuck, and I had to face the fact that I had a mother that was a woman, and that she was a woman on her own, and a woman that had many different men in her house. I always used to joke that I had more uncles than aunts than anyone I knew. So it meant from a very early age on, I was watching a woman live her life, not a mother, and while that personally cost me some things, it opened up a woman's life to me. (*Hand on the Pulse*)

Nestle realized that her family structure was not what others considered normal. One teacher openly criticized Nestle's situation and those of other "latch-key children" in front of her class at P.S. 094 in Brooklyn. Rather than feel shame, she realized that her teacher's broad and negative generalizations came from a lack of understanding and compassion. She developed a distrust of authority and learned to take comfort in what she saw as the realities of her own experiences. Increasingly, she sought kinship with others who shared similar experiences, and was soon introduced to the blue-collar lesbian bars of Manhattan through her friends. There she made new connections and found lovers during intermittent police raids. She increasingly struggled to find a sense of belonging in a world that seemingly refused to recognize that her experiences had value. The rise of lesbian feminism brought a new kind of resistance to her experience, a resistance that surprised her as it seemed to come from a younger generation within her community. In

many ways, what drove her early involvement in the founding of the archives was the need to ensure her experiences, and the experiences of her lesbian families, would not be silenced by the shift in lesbian politics.

To function within a culture that was increasingly finding itself at odds with one another, Nestle and the rest of the founding group had to establish a system of governance that would ensure all lesbian experiences would be represented in the archives. They decided that the archives would be run as a "Lesbian collective," with decisions made by consensus. The term "Lesbian collective" referred to both the idea and to a growing social experiment in the 1970s. Lesbian collectives had sprouted up across the country, primarily in larger cities, where lesbian women lived together communally with the aim of creating mini utopic enclaves where the responsibilities of chores, finances, child rearing, employment, etc. were shared. These collectives generally did not last long – one of the most famous, The Furies in Washington, D.C., lasted under a year – but they provided a model for the LHA, rooted in family, that emphasized the importance of lesbians living with the materials in the archive. The group defined the decision-making collective as "those women who have been active participants in the ongoing functioning of the archive" – i.e. not a board of directors, donors, or an advisory committee such as one would find at an institutional archive, but a group made up of those who are actively participating in the creation and operation of the archive. Such a policy ensured that those who worked closest to the collection on a regular basis and knew first-hand of its complexities and challenges would be the ones best suited to make any decisions relating to operations and publication permissions. The group also decided

that the collective would be responsible for the staffing of the Archives and hiring as funds permitted.

The LHA collective was and is more of a family than a form of governance. Joan and fellow co-founder Deborah Edel were lovers for many years while sharing their home with the archives. Many of the other women became friends or romantically involved with each other. They developed lasting connections that have lived on even after their volunteer work with the archives had ended. Working sessions, planning meetings, fundraising events and social gatherings frequently involved the making of a meal, an act Kath Weston notes helps strengthen familial bonds (104). Sometimes these were small, intimate dinners where guests who had traveled far to visit the archives could share their stories. Other times, dinners resembled large, loud family reunions. In the early years at her home, Nestle hosted open houses for volunteers and interested persons to share their experiences with the collections and the visitors who had used them. New acquisitions were presented and events announced. Time was often set aside for larger volunteer projects – mailings, sorting, book processing, cleaning. Dinner would often be served. In 1979, Nestle had launched a program called "At Home in the Archives" which expanded the open house idea into a fundraising event in her home. Speakers would be invited to present on a topic relating to lesbian history or contemporary issues, and singers or bands would perform. Two dollars would be charged at the door and half of the proceeds would be shared with the performer. Such programs emphasized hospitality over formality, and relationship-building over research.

In many ways, the archive favored the created lesbian-identified families over biological families. Though some of the founding members of the archive had backgrounds in various disciplines in academia, none had any formal training in library science. Where ONE saw this a shortcoming for themselves that needed to be remedied to fit in with established archival practices, members of the LHA saw their lack of training as an opportunity to rethink the way the archives could be organized. As a gesture towards celebrating women-identified-women, they began organizing individual records using women's first names, rather than the traditional use of organizing by last name. Last names represented the patriarchal practice of placing a higher value on patrilineal heritage. Organizing by first names ensured that women's gender identity was foregrounded and celebrated.

False names were sometimes used by donors with LHA's encouragement. LHA's archivists wanted to allow women to tell their stories without fear of persecution if anything should happen to the records (such as what had happened at Canada's *Body Politic*). Many women also felt empowered by the opportunity to share their experiences anonymously, allowing the experience to speak without feeling the need to develop an entire personal narrative within the archive's records. This allowed for a more fragmentary approach to individual collections than most modern archives prefer, an approach the LHA saw as an asset, rather than as a gesture of incompleteness.

LHA's unique approach to archiving did not disappear when trained library professionals began volunteering. Just as Nestle's notes suggest, the methods of archiving were passed down among the volunteers, especially to those who claimed previous

archiving experience. Volunteers who had, or were working towards, degrees in library science – were expected to learn LHA's own system. By setting their own standards and depending on a volunteer workforce, some might look at the LHA critically and claim this as a failure of organization. Printed finding aids are widely inconsistent in organization and scope, making it difficult for the archive to make available online. Inconsistent communication between volunteers sometimes means boxes and books are moved to new locations within the house. From the perspective of a 'professional' or 'institution-based' modern archive, the Lesbian Herstory Archives might appear disorganized and a challenge to navigate. For others, though, it is evidence that the archive is a living entity in a constant state of flux. Researching at the LHA, in whatever form that might take, is a collective effort.

The family structure the archive provided was not modeled after the patriarchal nuclear family. The archives collective does not have a set hierarchy. Even with the differences in age and experience, age did not assume power. If there was a "parent" in this family model, it is, as Joan Nestle suggested, the archive itself as an "act of mothering" (Nestle 1979, 11). The archives provided a kind of non-biological genealogy for lesbian kinship in a way that bars could not. The bars could be social, and there was the possibility that intergenerational stories would be shared, but the archives offered a continuity – a stable home for history – that the bars lacked.

The Archive as Home

The image of archiving as an act of mothering imagines a radically different kind of archive-as-home than the one figured by Jacques Derrida in *Archive Fever*. Recounting the Greek etymology of archive, Derrida wrote that archive comes from the root *arkhē*, which refers to both the *commencement* and *commandment* of law. In Ancient Greece, the *archon* was the superior magistrate, and his home – the *arkheion* – was where citizens would file and store official documents (2). This patriarchal image of the home as the locus of commands and regulation stands in stark contrast to the Lesbian Herstory Archive's image of the maternal home that is nurturing and expresses love. The arkhon's records are commandments, bestowed from a God-like authority. The LHA records are birthed and cared for throughout its existence.

It is critically important to the work of the Lesbian Herstory Archives that the collection resides in a literal home-space. As Nestle writes in her notes, the archive needs to be accessible to the community it represents and should never be sold to an academic institution – even a woman's college. These institutions have historically discriminated against women and particularly lesbians – discrimination which many of the archive's founders experienced first-hand. The archive as home space is both public and private. Recalling the opening epigraph, Nestle described her home/archive as "the place where the private becomes a public shadow. The place of uncontained conversations" (Nestle 2014). Scholars often conceive of the home as a strictly private sphere, offering shelter and in some cases security and a sense of belonging (Somerville 528). Of course this sense of privacy and refuge can extend to lesbian and gay homes, particularly given

LGBT histories of social discrimination and harassment. However, for some lesbians, the home can be a site where sexual identity is developed and made visible and create kinships that challenge heteronormative social pressures (Rich 632). In their essay on the performance and surveillance of lesbian identities in domestic environments, Lynda Johnston and Gill Valentine argue that lesbian homes have the potential to challenge the image of heterosexual family space. The home is a seemingly normative construct, a place out of view from the prying eyes of society, but it can also be a place where sexual identities can be explored and performed with a level of security and comfort (99). Arguing that there is a point in feminist conceptions of home when the public and private spheres become indistinguishable, Catherine MacKinnon noted

> For women the measure of intimacy has been the measure of the oppression. This is why feminism has had to explode the private. This is why feminism has seen the personal as political. In this sense, there is no private, either normatively or empirically (100).

This blending of the private and public, almost to the point where they become inseparable, exemplifies the Lesbian Herstory Archives, where deeply personal narratives – some never shared in life – are made publicly accessible for generations to come.

Where traditional archives are often spaces of restriction and surveillance, the lesbian home-space, absent some of the violence and oppression associated with other patriarchal home-spaces, can be comfortable and welcoming. When the archive began in the Upper West Side apartment of Joan Nestle and Deb Edel, the pantry off the kitchen held the archive's filing cabinets and shelves, and a table provided a place for a visitor to

spread out. Joan, Deb or a volunteer would greet the visitor at the door and invite them in, often offering them a beverage and pointing out the restroom. In some cases, meals would be made for visitors, and some who had traveled long distances would even be invited to stay over. Nestle's pet dog Denver and her cats had free rein. It was always clear that, when visiting the archive, one was visiting, first and foremost, a home. This relationship between home space and hospitality ensured that the visitor's experience was a social one. Pressing social and political issues could be discussed. Resources would be shared. Visitors and volunteers learned from one another and personal relationships developed over time.

On Joan Nestle's fiftieth birthday in 1980, she was asked what she wanted as a gift. She responded that she wanted the archives out of her apartment and in a new home. By this time, the collection had spread out well beyond the small pantry off the kitchen. Each room of the apartment hosted part of the collection. Even her own bedroom had been set-up as the audio-visual room, a room she half-jokingly claimed was where she engaged in her best creative work (*Hand on the Pulse*). Over time, the archive had grown to such an extent that she no longer had a private place to retreat. Everything – cooking, reading, cleaning, bathing, sex, etc. – all occurred within the context of the archives. The archives collective launched an aggressive grassroots funding campaign to raise money for a new home, tapping into the idea of the archive as home to encourage donations. The January, 1990 newsletter included an impassioned appeal for assistance in finding a new home for the archive, offering suggestions for fundraisers that could be hosted by local lesbian groups across the country. They requested lists of these events so that a calendar

could be sent out to the mailing list, marketing to local "branches of the Family" (4). It was important to the archives collective that the new home be located in an area that was accessible by public transportation and within an area densely populated by lesbians. By July, 1991, a volunteer with the archives who was also a real estate agent helped the group to purchase an old, three-story brownstone in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn for $313,000. Throughout the 1980s, Park Slope had become one of the largest neighborhoods for lesbian women anywhere in the country, as gentrification led to the redevelopment of the area.[29] Minor repairs to the building were completed before the archive's first caretakers – Polly Thistlethwaite (a long-time LHA volunteer and documenter of the archive's history) and Lucinda Zoe (a doctoral student in library science at Columbia) – moved into the apartment on the top floor in January, 1992. Over the next year and a half, renovations were completed throughout the first and second floors, as well as the basement storage area. The first floor needed to become wheelchair accessible, a security system installed, floors refinished, walls painted, a renovated bathroom with updating plumbing and electrical wiring, a skylight installed over the main staircase, and shelving units built to hold the collection. Re-emphasizing that the labor of the archive should always be shouldered directly by the lesbian community, the architects were two lesbian women who volunteered their services and volunteers completed the majority of the restoration work.

From the street, 484 14th Street looks like any of the other residential brownstones in Park Slope. The address is etched into the glass above the door, which is surrounded

[29] See Tamar Rothenberg's essay "'And She Told Two Friends' Lesbians Creating Urban Social Space" in David Bell & Gill Valentine's Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 165-181

by elegant stone carvings reflecting the primarily Georgian architecture of this part of Brooklyn. Halfway down the block, the road ends in the popular green space of Prospect Park. One would have to look closely for the small brass plaque on the door that announces this building as the Lesbian Herstory Archives. It doesn't feel like the building is trying to hide itself or seem inconspicuous. It just doesn't seem to feel the need to announce itself to the rest of the world, and in this way it continues to blur the fine line between public and private spheres.

Walking through two double sets of doors into the foyer, visitors are often greeted here by a volunteer. This first encounter highlights the social importance of the archive-as-home from the very beginning. Depending on the visitor's time and how many visitors and volunteers are at the collection, the greeting segues into a tour of the building, peppered with history and an explanation of the policies, which basically boil down to:

- Look around as much as you like.
- Feel free to take anything off a shelf that looks interesting, but try to keep things in order.
- If you can't remember where you got something, leave it out for a volunteer to re-shelve.
- Don't damage anything.
- Don't mark on anything.

A large staircase in the foyer goes up to the second floor and the third floor caretaker apartment. A bulletin board on the wall posts events and community notices, reminding

the visitor that this home is not just for historical research, but is a hub for the local lesbian community.

The parlor room opens up to the left, with a large alcove of windows letting natural light shine on several pieces of comfortable, upholstered furniture. This reading room stands in stark contrast to the reading rooms of most institutional archives that value function and the surveillance of visitors over comfort. The walls are lined floor-to-ceiling with built-in shelves, overflowing with books – fiction and non-fiction, some new but mostly old. Half of one wall is lined with metal filing cabinets, containing the archive's vertical subject files and some finding aids of the various manuscript and special collections the archive maintains. Adjoining the parlor room is the dining room. Darkly painted, this room can be closed off from light to screen films on the large TV cart. When not being used as the audio-visual room, a large dining table in the center of the room hosts meetings, processing, research, and occasionally meals. The adjoining kitchen is fully furnished, and allows volunteers and visitors to have coffee and to host the occasional events. Visitors can bring lunches with them and eat during their visit – an unheard of practice in most archives. A small garden in the back provides a bit of fresh air on warmer days, and leads to a staircase down to the basement, where new acquisitions are processed and room is set aside for overflow storage.

Coming back to the front hall, climbing the main staircase leads to the second floor where the archive's special collections are held. A bathroom at the top of the stairs has a large screen frame covered in lesbian feminist and radical queer buttons, clearly making use of every available space in the house. The rooms up here seem to be filled to

capacity, with desks covered in boxes and file folders and shelving encroaching on the narrow walkways. The smaller back room is covered in vintage yellow wallpaper, and holds individual, organizational and conference records as well as some periodicals. A narrow passageway connects this room to the larger front room. The passageway contains a marble counter and "Hers and Hers" sinks, recalling a time in the history of the building when these upstairs rooms were used as bedrooms. Across from the sinks in what used to be a series of built-in dressers are the archive's t-shirt collection. For ease of reference nearby binder holds photocopies of all the t-shirt designs with the number of the flat box where the t-shirt is located.

The front two rooms hold the rest of the archive's periodical collection, as well as unpublished poetry and fiction, and overflow subject files that no longer fit in the cabinets on the first floor. Back at the stairway, a sign is posted near the stairs up to the third floor explaining that it is a private residence, and discourages the visitor from climbing further. This clear marker of private space reminds the visitor that not only does this archive feel like a home, it is one. The rare sign of restricted access also reminds the visitor that there are aspects of every life that must remain off-limits.

Hospitality and the Archive

The structures of home and family espoused in the Lesbian Herstory Archives from its inception come with a pattern of hospitality. As Joan Nestle's notes on radical archiving stated, "its atmosphere must be nourishing, entry into our archives should be entry into a caring home" (Nestle 1979, 11). All lesbian women must be welcomed into

the archives. This welcome involves introductions, a tour of the space, an explanation of how to use it, and at various points in the archive's existence, an invitation to meals and/or conversation. These gestures of hospitality are also gestures of positionality that allow those working and visiting the archives to mark their own relationship to lesbian identity.

In his lectures on hospitality, Jacques Derrida argues that hospitality is an ordering activity rooted in practices associated with national identities going back to ancient times. Hospitality establishes rules through which people can be identified as hosts and guests, citizens and non-citizens, citizens and foreigners, those who belong and those who do not (21). The gesture of welcoming lesbian women into the home of the archive defines the individuals doing the welcoming as those who are in charge – they are the caretakers and guardians. They establish the rules of engagement, even if those rules seem more relaxed than an institutional academic archive. The host asks the visitor a series of questions: "What is your name? Where are you from? What are you researching? What will you do with this information? How long will you be with us?" The hospitable gesture of welcoming allows the visitor to become intelligible to the host. It is a sign that the host cares and is interested in the visitor, but also a means for the host to ensure that the person they are letting into the archival home belongs there and will handle the collection properly. In this way, hospitality establishes systems of rules and structures of belonging that define identity just as much as the documents within the archive.

To feel like one belongs in the archive, either as a host or as a visitor, one must follow the rules of hospitality. Establishing belonging can be done in various ways. The archive has depended almost entirely on volunteer labor. The giving of the gift of time and labor as a volunteer defines the individual as a caretaker, a member of the LHA collective who is able to make decisions about the direction and management of the archive. For lesbians who are unable to donate time and labor, due to geography or other commitments, they can demonstrate their belonging by making donations of money or material, identifying them as valued friends and supporters of the archive. Total strangers or first-time visitors to the archive have the most to prove. They are unknown, and have to demonstrate their intentions during the introductions that happen prior to and/or at the moment of arrival.

The hospitable act of introduction also defines the parameters of how a visitor is accepted in the archive. It should be noted that while the Lesbian Herstory Archives are expressly welcoming of lesbian women, they do not restrict access to the collections solely to this group. Not identifying as a lesbian, however, may limit your ability to volunteer or participate in the management of the archive. This is, after all, not your history to tell or to preserve. A self-identified lesbian must be the residential caretaker of the archives, not a bisexual woman or a homosexual man, or any other sexual identity.

The rules of hospitality allow the archive to define who belongs and who does not belong to the broad category of lesbian. Identity formations are necessarily exclusionary. To define who you are is also to define who you are not. This has become a challenge for the archives through the years. What counts as lesbian? Do you need to have had sex with

a woman to be considered a lesbian? In the 1970s, when political lesbianism was at its height – lesbianism as a political choice that did not require sexual interaction – the archives defined the scope of their acquisitions in terms of any expression of same-sex desire.[30] Such a rule allowed for a broad acquisitions policy that accounted for materials that pre-dated the popularity of the term lesbian, but even then, expressed same-sex desire can be difficult to recognize or define. Most frequently, the archives have depended on donors to self-identify as lesbian to be recognized within the collection. Transgender identity has also posed challenges to the LHA. If you are trans man who has had a life-long attraction to women, do you get archived for being born biologically female? Are you recognized as a woman by the archives if you were biologically born a man? Do you need to have had surgery to be able to claim identity as a woman? Can transgender individuals become members of the archives collective that makes decisions on the management and operations of the collection? These are all questions the archives have had to tackle over the years. For example, some members of the archive collective expressed disapproval that Brandon Teena, a transman raped and murdered in 1993, was included among a list of lesbians who had recently died in a feature article in the January, 1995 archives newsletter. Their grievance was rooted in the belief that there needed to be an archive that focused its attention solely on lesbian history and issues, and that to include transgender narratives confused lesbian identity. Questions of inclusion are still debated by the various LHA constituents, reflecting the ever-changing fluidity of identity formations.

[30] See the first issue of the *Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter*, June 1975.

Hospitality in the archives is also not limited to physical interactions. Accessibility is one of the ways the LHA has been able to extend its hospitality to people around the world, even when they are not able to visit the archive home. For example, the first LHA newsletter contained a specific request for readers to reach out to rural lesbians. Founding member Julia Stanley, who had moved south to rural Dowelltown, TN in the mid-1970s, volunteered to collect the names and addresses of rural lesbians in order "to create a large map of the United States on which we will represent the Lesbian network by marking the small towns and villages where Lesbians are establishing themselves on farms and communes" (3). This map could then be used as a reference for lesbian who were traveling to connect with local communities and also alerted rural lesbians to the possibility of archiving their materials, either with the LHA in New York, or, as Joan Nestle suggested in her "notes on radical archiving," in what she hoped would be regional archives that would be established across the country. Such a horizontal regional approach to archiving demonstrated the reach and reimagining of the function of an archive, allowing each local community to establish their own interpretation of lesbian identity. The archives had already become an idea, a catalyst to connect women from across the country who might never step foot in the physical archive itself, but would be influenced by the work the volunteers had undertaken. Women could write to the archives in New York with research questions, and volunteers would attempt to accommodate as best they could. Joan Nestle and other archive volunteers also assembled a series of slide presentations that allowed them to travel all over the world to share some of the stories and materials within the collection. These presentations were immensely

popular and occurred in homes, churches, bars, schools, bookstores, and meeting halls. They became a way of publicizing the work of the archive to local and non-local communities, and solicit both material and financial donations. Throughout this, archives have always stated that this history belonged to all lesbian women, and encouraged audiences to get involved.

Another way the archives expressed hospitality through accessibility was to offer suggestions of ways to utilize the archive that would not necessarily be considered – ways that intentionally differentiated the LHA from institutional archives. An example of this can be found in the sixth issue of the LHA Newsletter, published in July, 1980 titled "Archiving for Daily Survival." Written by an anonymous author (likely Joan Nestle), this list reemphasized that the archives were more than a center for academic research. They could become a necessary part of daily living.

> * If you are traveling to a different city or region and want to know what is happening there, come read the area's Lesbian newsletter or find a contact dyke in our back issues of *Lesbian Connection*.
>
> * If you are looking for alternative services in health or counseling.
>
> * If you want to publish something but are not sure where, come look through Lesbian journals, newsletters, and up to date publication notices on the bulletin board.
>
> * If your group wants to read about past collective processes to help work out current problems or set up new structures.
>
> * If you want ideas about conference formats come look at our conference files.

* If you are looking for a Lesbian group to work with, come read about their goals and methods in our organization file.

* If you are an editor looking for material come look at what women have sent us.

* If you want to know what Lesbian businesses exist or find ideas about creating a new one.

* If you want to prepare a bibliography on women's issues and don't want to work in a patriarchal library come use the collection, the Women's Studies Abstracts, the Alternate Press Index.

* If you want inspiration for your writings or visual arts come see the collection of Lesbian images we have gathered.

* If you want to read the unpublished voices of our community.

* If you are coming out and want to read and hear how the experience affected other Lesbians.

* If you are involved in Lesbian Mothers custody work come use our file of legal briefs, news clippings and articles.

* If you want to know where to send your mailings for an event come use our organizational file.

* Mostly – if you want a few hours of spiritual uplift in a Lesbian place where our voices and faces through the years can speak to you come to the Lesbian Herstory Archives. (LHA #6, 4)

As a center for hospitality, this list demonstrates the ways the LHA positioned itself as the primary destination for every need within the lesbian community. It was a

clearinghouse of information for survival (legal, and health services/advocacy), for business (consulting, networking and travel information), a place for organizing (political records, issues research, and contact information), a place for creative inspiration (written and visual collections, publisher contacts and calls), as well as a place to just be present, and to connect with strangers who shared similar interests. This list alone demonstrates how the group had reenvisioned the archive within the framework of lesbian feminism, a framework that expanded the ways of connecting the community outside bars, political rallies and isolated social events. It means not requiring an application process to access the archives. An optional guest book replaces lengthy forms given by some archives to issue a research card. The LHA advertises collection holdings as well as alternative approaches to using an archive that would encourage non-academic audiences to visit. While visitors are encouraged to contact the archives ahead of time to let them know what they are interested in so items can be pulled in advance, a trained volunteer is always on hand to give visitors a tour of the collection, and explain where to find items. Unlike visitors in traditional archives who are escorted to sterile reading rooms, where personal items are checked into a locker and where specifically requested materials are brought to them, visitors to the LHA are encouraged to explore the archive, with the expectation that they will handle the history with care and respect, and that any items pulled from shelves, closets or filing cabinets be left out so that a volunteer can ensure they are returned to the appropriate location.

Ultimately, the hospitality extended the reach of the archive's narratives into every aspect of daily life. In an interview commemorating the work of the Lesbian

Herstory Archives, Nancy Bereano, publisher of the lesbian feminist publishers Firebrand Press, recalled her first experiences with the archive:

> My guess is I would have heard about the archives through friends in New York, through friends in bookstores – Womankind Books in New York – maybe through reading a women's publication, and when I got there my experience was of enormous relief because it was neither a bar or a softball field, both of which were places I was learning I was supposed to feel comfortable at, but I didn't feel very comfortable at. (*Hands on the Pulse*)

Bereano's statement was a common narrative. Women discovered the archives in a variety of ways, but once there, many found a space that was welcoming, affirming, and a respite from other more isolating spaces of lesbian encounter. Yet, the existence of the list of ways the archive could be used on a daily basis also highlights one of the primary challenges the group encountered in this work. While volunteers had put into practice a theoretical reimagining of an archive, the public image of an archive as a cold, dusty, restrictive space for serious research was an image that had to be constantly worked against. Like other archives, those who worked at the LHA had to advertise the presence and availability of their own collection and services, but the LHA also had to simultaneously explain the ways their archive was not like other archives, and that, most importantly, their archive was useful to the average person.

Coming Back Home: An Intergenerational Call to Return to Radical Lesbianism

Despite the radical reimagining of the archive through lesbian feminist principles, the archive still fundamentally operates under the Foucauldian framework that the archive is both the law and the place where the law is housed – the archive's holdings define the parameters of how lesbian identity is understood. But the archive's hospitality allows for an ever-growing number of narratives which challenge and re-shape the archive's understanding of what lesbian identity is and can be, and the reach of the archive's narratives can extend into every aspect of daily life. In many of her early talks on the work of the archives, Joan Nestle would point out to a crowd of lesbian women and say, "yes, yes, you are the Lesbian the archives exists for, to tell and share your story" (Thistlethwaite 156). While the vision of the LHA began with a small group of women at the Gay Academic Union, it became a reality and developed because many members of the community supported and invested in it – through their manual labor, monetary contributions, material donations, emotional encouragement, and active use. But who is this "you" Nestle speaks to? She frequently reuses this material in speeches and the audience's understanding of lesbian identity has changed significantly since the 1970s.

The vast discrepancies of lesbian identity amongst the range of generations of volunteers was captured by Emily Millay Haddad, herself a volunteer, in an open letter to the archive's mailing list. The "Letter to My Sisters" was sent in January, 2004 and was reprinted in the LHA's most recent newsletter, which appeared in the spring of that year.

> I am a 23-year-old volunteer at the Lesbian Herstory Archives, where I had a conversation with another young woman. She and her friend were joking around about how she would have really thrived in the 1970s with all the consciousness raising and the lesbian feminism. "I should have grown up then," she said. "That time would have really suited me." "Yes," I said. "But we need you now. We need all that passionate conviction and energy for the fight now." (13)

Haddad goes on to lament the absence of the radical energy in contemporary politics, a radical energy she encountered through the records in the archive. In many ways her letter responds to the increasing absorption of gay and lesbian identities into mainstream culture. She begs for the return of those "who long for the consciousness raising of the 1970s, for the passion, for the arguments, for the separatism, for the pure innocence (to our jaded postmodern eyes) and the noble naiveté" (13). For those who lived through it and have grown comfortable, and for those who didn't but who yearn for alternatives, her letter is a call to come home – back to the archive, and back to the radical political work that inspired its founding. Unlike some of her peers who now choose to disidentify with terms like gay or lesbian, because they see them as increasingly participatory in heteronormative assimilationism, Haddad found inspiration in the archive. She found, amid the dusty records, a possibility of lesbianism that was radical once again, performing itself differently, driven partly by nostalgia and partly out of her own desire for alternative models of being.

It is possible to see older archives of LGBT histories as outdated, capturing a kind of sexual identity that no longer seems relevant to the present. Yet, in that, there is the

possibility to tap back into that energy of radical reimagining. It is as if the kind of lesbian identity that the LHA was documenting had become so different and so far removed from the present, that it became new again. A kind of queer renaissance of radical lesbian politics.

The living cultural context of the archive ensures, to a degree, that such narratives can be expressed in person, rather than just reading about it through newspapers and journals. On one of my own visits to the archive in 2012, I was invited to examine the entire t-shirt collection with the archive's volunteer that day – a sixty-something woman who had been volunteering with the archives since the 1980s – and an artist who was using the images on the t-shirts as inspiration for a project she was working on. Both women self-identifed themselves as lesbians to me, and while there was at least a thirty year age gap between the two, as they discussed the t-shirts and the rallies that they were worn in, it became clear to me the ways this archive experience made history present.

"Oh, I remember this image," said the volunteer, holding up a t-shirt. "This was from 1986 Pride."

"That must have been a hell of a year," responded the artist. "Right in the middle of the AIDS crisis."

"Yeah, but it was also exciting. We'd just gotten the Gay Rights Bill passed through city council."

The volunteer went on to share her experiences of the 1986 Pride parade. Moments the artist and I had read about in LGBT history books, she was describing from first-hand accounts, pulling out photo albums and pins to help visualize her story. She

was a solid thirty years younger than my grandmother, but I couldn't help recall the times sitting in my grandmother's kitchen while she told me stories of family, and pulled out various items from closets that helped her remember and make the story come alive. This was the kind of context volunteers like Joan Nestle and Mabel Hampton could give to visitors about pre-1970s lesbian life.

Obviously this "living cultural context" changes from generation to generation. There is a steady and growing stream of people using the collection – particularly for academic research. The archives are open five days a week or less for about three to four hours each day. But despite its efforts and some exceptions, like that of Emily Millay Haddad, the archive has had difficulty appealing to a younger generation of women who might identity as lesbian or queer and who might benefit from the coming-out narratives and political organizing accounts the archives maintain. This is partly due to the difficulty in putting finding aids online and the lack of a developed social media presence. On the one hand, the LHA is one of the global leaders in documenting the lesbian experience from the pre-1970s period to the late 1980s. But with dwindling labor and financial resources, one of the clear challenges of participation in the coming decades will be figuring out how the principles of the LHA can be adapted for a new generation.

Chapter III

Encountering the Unexpected: The Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies

> "There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can 'invoke' or not" (108).
>
> - Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City"
>
> "Time past and time future
> What might have been and what has been
> Point to one end, which is always present" (14).
>
> - T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"

Behind a key-card access door in the center of Andersen Library is an elevator which travels over eighty-three feet below ground into the caverns of a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. Protected by concrete, sandstone and limestone, these caverns were excavated in 2000 to store the University of Minnesota's special collections and rare books archives. Out of sight, and accessible only to archive staff, these collections include a wide variety of materials from the library's different archival divisions.[31] Descending in the elevator, cool, dry air rushes into the steel-walled chamber. The doors open to a small antechamber with two hallways branching off to the sides. Turning to the

[31] Andersen Library houses 11 special collections units: the Charles Babbage Institute of information technology, the Children's Literature Collection, the Givens Collection of African American Literature, the Immigration History Research Center, the Kautz Family YMCA Archives, the Social Welfate History Archives, the University Archives, the Upper Midwest Jewish Archives, the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies, the Manuscripts Division, and the Special Collections and Rare Books Unit. The Manuscripts Division has three sub-collections: the Performing Arts Archives, the Northwest Architectual Archives and the Literary Manuscripts Collections. Similarly, the Special Collections and Rare Books unit houses several sub-collections including the Sherlock Holmes archive, the Collection of Cuneiform Inscriptions, the Dahllof Collection of Swedish Americana, the Mertle Collection on the History of Photomechanics, the Kann Collection of Austrian History and Culture, the Kleiner Collection of Silent Movie Music and the Laourdas Modern Greek Collection.

left, a set of red double doors can be entered with another swipe with a key-card. Beyond this door is a long, narrow hallway leading to the room which houses the bulk of the Tretter Collection of GLBT Studies.

If you were to enter into this archive in 2010, any fantasy that archives are a place of order and logic would be quickly eradicated upon turning into this hallway. Unmarked boxes line the side of the length of the hallway. A few open boxes give quick glimpses at the contents – back issues of *Playgirl* magazine, yellowing copies of the *Bay Area Reporter*, stacks of videotapes labeled "RSVP Vacations" and a suitcase with a tag hanging on it reading "Greg Louganis."

At the very end of the long hallway is another red door with a key card. The door is unmarked with the exception of a small rainbow flag sticker on the lower corner of a window that looks into a dark room. On entering, a flick of the light switch reveals several rows of floor-to-ceiling shelves, each nearly filled with books and boxes. While the room has several rows of shelves, the bulk of the materials in this room belong to other collections. The Tretter archive takes up only the last three rows – the first for processed papers and personal collections, the second for books, and the last for objects. The rest of the collection spills out into the aisles and is stacked along the walls. Some of these books and magazines appear to be waiting for processing. Some are marked for deaccessioning, likely because the archive already owns a copy. Some rarely used materials are waiting to be packed and sent to an off-site storage facility. Boxes of RSVP Vacation videos are such an example. RSVP Vacations, one of the oldest travel companies to focus exclusively on an LGBT clientele, has been videotaping their cruises

and tours for decades so that they can be sold to customers as a memento of their journey. The company has donated the master copies to the Tretter Collection, but with space at a premium, and a perceived lack of interest from scholars, the decision was made to send them to off-site storage. Other materials are simply sitting on the floor because there is currently no other place to put them. Within the limited space of the archive, every item has a purpose, and every inch of space must count.

Digging through boxes one day as a temporary paid member of the archive's staff, I came across a green plastic flyswatter in a box of unsorted papers simply labeled "Jean Tretter." The box was on a shelf with the processed materials. In a manner of speaking, I was struck by the flyswatter. What is it doing down here? It is not in the archive to be functional – the storage conditions in the caverns are designed to limit bug and rodent infestations. The flyswatter is also boxed with other materials – not sitting on a shelf where it can be readily used. There is a moment where I am surprised, where my expectations of what I would find in this box are thrown into question. With little information to go by, I'm tempted to ignore it and move on to more interesting and culturally relevant material that is literally tumbling off the shelves and into the aisles. Yet part of me does not want to quickly dismiss the object as an unintended intruder in the space. Its presence is somehow queer. I begin to wonder what a flyswatter has to do with LGBT history or culture. I realize that to understand how a flyswatter fits into LGBT history or culture, I must first have an understanding about what LGBT history or culture *is*. There is no easy answer for this, of course, as my previous chapters should reveal. Trying to figure out how the flyswatter relates to LGBT history or culture reveals

the discursive operations that construct LGBT identity. Somebody, somewhere (often an unnamed, unknown archivist) has some idea what LGBT identity is, and they are collecting materials which help support this interpretation. The flyswatter is the anomaly, an object that proposes questions, that throws this entire interpretation of LGBT identity into question, undermining the perception of the archive as the arbiter of discourse and guardian of history. If we allow ourselves to be stopped by the flyswatter's presence, to be surprised even for a moment, it has the potential to shift our focus from LGBT identity to queer historiography.

Of course, the presence of the flyswatter in the archive is entirely accidental. The papers around it suggest that this was one of the boxes the archive's founder, Jean Tretter, took out of his home to begin the collection at the university. It likely got shuffled into the box along with the papers, and at the time of this visit into the caverns – closed to the general public – nobody had sat down to sort through the box and inevitably remove the errant item. I would like, however, to advocate for its continued presence in the archive. Its accidental presence does not mean it does not have value. Unlike many of the other objects in the room, selected to help answer the question of what LGBT identity is, the flyswatter does not answer the question – it poses one. It is an object that is both provocative and queer – its very presence disrupts the archive's project of making meaning.

Typically, archivists consciously or unconsciously re-narrate or remove disruptive objects, order is imposed, and narratives that do not seem to fit are discretely ignored. This is the work of the archivist – work that makes the archive recognizably useful within

the expectations and conventions of academia. So then why would disruption be desirable and queer? Scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu and Judith Butler have written extensively on the subject of *habitus*, the values, expectations, and dispositions of particular social groups that dictate the ways we behave, becoming seemingly naturalized parts of our existence, and which are acquired through the experiences of everyday life. [32] Queer theory recognizes that habitus is behind the naturalization of all identity formations – race, sexuality, class, nationality, etc. The archive is one of the places where habitus becomes naturalized. The LGBT archive becomes a site for homonormativity, where specific understandings of sexual and gender identity are affirmed and transmitted. But to recognize habitus in our lives is to begin to become aware that there are other possible ways of seeing ourselves and our relationships to one another. Disruption is a necessary part of this exploration. Moments of surprise, shock, and delay can reveal the personal and social expectations that influence the ways people behave or the ways in which they see the world.

The sheer volume of materials in an archive make moments of surprise and shock an inevitable component of archival research, so much so that "archive stories" where scholars have begun documenting their experiences engaging with archives has become a popular subject within cultural studies.[33] The imposition of a seemingly 'natural' logic often encounters counter-narratives, absences, lost/misplaced items, and occasionally – in such cases as the flyswatter – the unexpected object. The archivist's desire for the archive to be useful and "truthful," and a scholar's desire to find answers that validate their

[32] See Butler's "Performativity's Social Magic," in Bourdieu: A Critical Reader, ed. Richard Shusterman (Blackwell: 1998).
[33] See Burton (2005), Johnson (2011), Steedman (2002)

research claims means that these queer disruptions are often glossed over. Such moments are more than anecdotes or quickly forgotten aberrations. They gesture towards a deeper complexity of the human experience that the archive cannot fully comprehend or encapsulate. The Foucauldian and Derridian conceptions of the archive focus on the archive as the institution of law, or the actual ordering of logic (a kind of habitus). In this chapter, I argue that the moments in an archive that surprise – even as simple as finding a flyswatter where one does not expect – disrupts the perception of the archive as an infallible authority on the human experience, and instead reasserts that everything that has been collected, and even the very ordering logic of an archive, is itself an expression of human desires, desires that are messy, spontaneous, illogical, sexual, and above all, inspiring.

By attending to specific objects within the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies, this chapter focuses on the queer disruptive possibilities of the archive (if attention is paid to them), and the ways in which these disruptions are "managed" by archivists to ensure a consistency in the narrative of LGBT identity the archive is attempting to articulate. When archives fail to do what is expected of them, when they become impossible, there exists a radical queer potentiality to question such expectations. The first section explores the role of desire in the creation of personal collections, and how this desire poses a challenge to the archive. The second section looks at the queerness of an over-abundant archive. Tretter's tendency to collect anything remotely related to LGBT identity exceeded the physical limits of the archival space. Without finding aids or an ability to organize everything in a way that made sense in an academic archive, it was a difficult

archive to use in the traditional sense, but offered value in the ability to encounter the unexpected. The third section examines the shame and discomfort that can occur when archivists deal with objects of a sexual nature, and how these feelings become embedded in the archive's narratives of sexual identity. Finally, the last section looks at specific objects within the collection that resist easy classification, and which encourage archival participants – archivists, scholars, volunteers, visitors – to dream.

The Tretter Collection is a unique site to conduct these investigations. Tretter's archiving began in 1972 when, as a linguistics specialist during the Vietnam War, he started taking classes at the University of Minnesota through the benefit of the G.I. Bill. He became active in organizing the first Twin Cities Pride Festival, which began as a picnic in 1972, and he was also a participant in F.R.E.E. (Fight Repression of Erotic Expression), the country's first university-sanctioned student organization advocating civil rights for homosexuals. Tretter's participation in gay activism led him to the university's anthropology program, where he intended to study gay and lesbian cultures in different regions of the world. According to Tretter, the faculty and staff insisted no such thing as gay culture exists, and Tretter dropped out to pursue his studies on his own. The archive was originally a personal collection focusing almost exclusively on gay material and was housed entirely in Tretter's Saint Paul apartment. He developed a local reputation as a gay historian, and those who knew of him and his collection could contact him with questions or to see materials. In the 1980s, he met Jim Kepner from the ONE Archive, who shared his insights on historiography and validated Tretter's grassroots-style, never-say-no, dig-in-the-dumpsters-if-needed collecting habits. The collection was

ultimately purchased by the University of Minnesota in 2001 as the seed of a larger, broader LGBT archive that would support their new sexuality studies minor, and it has been something of an anomaly in their archival holdings for over a decade. Tretter retired for health reasons in 2010, and since then an interim curator, Stewart Van Cleve, and a new full-time curator, Lisa Vecoli, have worked to trim down and organize the archive to make it a usable academic resource. All archives exist in some state of flux, but each new incarnation of the Tretter Collection has dramatically demonstrated the ways in which the institutional academic archive organizes material in the effort to make meaning. The impact of the changes to the Tretter Collection are not always readily visible to the casual researcher. The once-overflowing storage room for the collection is off-limits to the public. Archivists also rarely intend to be the center of attention, and the work of ordering a collection is seen as secondary to most scholars who come to see the archival materials, not to study archival logics. More than any other chapter, I draw on ethnographic interviews and my own personal involvement with the Tretter Collection, where I have been a resident scholar, the performing arts collections specialist, cataloguer, advisory committee member and chair, and an exhibit curator at various times over the past six years.

"Giving a Hoot": Legacy, Desire and the Personal Collection

In a box marked "Dean Goodman" there are a number of file folders containing photographs sorted by year. In one of the earlier folders is a photograph of a young man in a suit. With sandy blond hair, lacquered to show the streaks of a comb that once ran

through it, the man looks pensively out to the left of the camera. The back of the photo has two separate and contradictory inscriptions, written at different times judging by the penmanship and color of the ink. The first inscription reads: "Don't remember when this was - I've shed some tears destroying and giving some pictures away - but I'd rather do this now. No one I know would think or give a hoot what happened to some things except ones concerned – like you." The second: "My high school senior year book 1937."

Born in 1920, Goodman was an actor, writer, and director who lived much of his life on the west coast. He was an active reformer within the Actor's Equity Union, and was briefly married to Maria Seiber, daughter of Marlene Dietrich – the subject of his 1993 book *Maria, Marlene, & Me: Intimate Recollections of a Life in Theatre and Film*. Diagnosed with cancer in 2004, he began preparing for his death by penning his own obituary and organizing his papers. In 2005, Goodman donated the bulk of his theatre memorabilia to the San Francisco Performing Arts Museum, his gay-related books to the San Francisco Public Library's GLBT collection, and the rest of his personal papers went to the Tretter Collection. He died on July 4, 2006 at the age of 86.

By sorting the photographs chronologically, the archive values chronology over sentiment, data over emotion. The photograph is valuable because it captures the subject of this personal collection when he was in high school in 1937. Filed along with a host of other photographs from the period – some unlabeled – this particular photograph is easily overlooked, and the desire it articulates to be cared for, to be remembered, left unremarked. The encounter with such personal appeals, expressions of remembrance directed specifically to you, the reader, are jarring moments that remind the archival

visitor that behind the grand narratives being told through various collections of materials was a whole person who lived a complex life only barely captured in the papers and photographs that fill the Hollinger box before you. To respond to Goodman's call to "give a hoot," you have to see him as more than a disembodied voice that gives shape to contemporary understandings of gay American history.

The inscription on Goodman's youthful photograph speaks of an often unspoken characteristic of the personal collection in the LGBT archive. The "you" the inscription refers to is no longer known, but its personal appeal to be remembered – for someone to "give a hoot" – is passed along to the archive, and to the scholar/archivist who reads it in the present. Like many LGBT archives, the vast majority of the Tretter Collection's holdings are unsolicited personal collections like the Goodman papers – donated to the archive towards the end of the person's life, or donated to the archive through a deed of gift after they have passed away. The expressed mission of the Tretter Collection is to be an "archival repository for the personal papers of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) persons and the archives of GLBT organizations, and related documents of historical and cultural value" (Tretter Statement). By arguing that the collections reflect the important historical and cultural experiences of individual LGBT lives, the archive masks the intention behind the gift of the personal collection. When a photo such as this enters an LGBT archive, it no longer serves the purposes of its previous owners. The object is shrouded in an epistemology of importance by archivists and scholars, where it is made to speak on behalf of the collective LGBT community. The photograph, for example, is not valued for what it says about Goodman as a person,

but rather as a representation of early 20th century young gay men and an affirmation that gay men existed in 1937. Details of a person's life are only as important as they speak to a larger social claim. The donor's personal desires, the reason for their collecting and eventual donation, are all erased from view through various archival maneuverings. Finding aids, for example, often include information regarding a collection's acquisition, but they are often brief and vague. Goodman's simply states "Donated by Dean Goodman in 2005" – nothing about his desire to leave a legacy, nothing about his hopes that he would be remembered as a contributor to west coast theatre, and certainly nothing about his fear of being forgotten, even though these are the primary reasons this material is in the collection. Also, it is accepted practice in archives across the country that the documents relating to acquisition – correspondence between an archive and a donor, deeds of gift, etc. – are kept separately from the donated collection in the archive's private organizational files, and are rarely made available to scholars. This action discourages researchers from asking "How did this get here?" or "Why did this person donate their collection?" To the archive, such questions are quickly dismissed, as they might call into question the presumed objectivity of the archive and distract from the grand epistemological narrative, in this case of LGBT identity.

Such desires - the need to be remembered, to leave a legacy that will allow the life of a person to have meaning after they are gone – are especially palpable in LGBT archives. According to the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging, when compared to heterosexual counterparts, LGBT seniors are twice as likely to age as a single person, twice as likely to live alone, and three-to-four times less likely to have children to support

them (NRCLGBTA, April 2011). Often without children to carry on the legacies and memories of the parent, some LGBT individuals experience anxiety and fear at the end of their lives, believing they will not be remembered, that their life lacked a greater purpose, or a feeling that they are leaving a limited impact on the world. For some, the archive becomes a way for LGBT elders to create a legacy that lives beyond them.

While perhaps heightened within the LGBT community, the concern over futurity is not exclusive to LGBT elders. In recent years, queer studies scholars have examined some of the ways questions of futurity and progeny drive American society. In his book *No Future*, Lee Edelman defines repro-futurity as a kind of political orientation that depends on constant sacrifice and awareness of a proto-Child that is always not yet born or not yet grown up. Under this model, social and political actions promise a better tomorrow, but Edelman points out that tomorrow is unattainable – *always* a day away (30). This is captured in such movements as the "It Gets Better" anti-bullying campaign, which frames the present in terms of pain and invisibility, with a future full of hope and equality. Under the repro-futurity model, history is the narrative of the always "better-yet-to-come." In a roundtable discussion on queer temporality, Annamarie Jagose asked "how queer scholarship might best imagine modes of being lesbian that refuse the consequential promise of 'history,'" noting that while origin stories had been widely critiqued, few scholars have questioned the progressivist doctrine of the improved tomorrow.[34] In the book, *In a Queer Time and Place*, Judith Halberstam offers examples of responses to actions of violence and performances of art that have offered alternative

[34] See Freeman, 165, and Dinshaw, C., Edelman, L., Ferguson, R., Freccero, C., Freeman, E., Halberstam, J., Jagose, A., Nealon, C., Nguyen, H. (2007). Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion. *G L Q: a journal of lesbian and gay studies*, 13(2-3), 177-195.

ways of conceiving of a queer history that goes beyond a heterosexually-based reproduction/kinship model. One example Halberstam offers is a concert where folksinger Ferron performed on stage with Kaia Wilson of the postpunk dyke band The Butchies, creating a moment of intergenerationality where separate generations connected through a moment of *untimeliness*, rather than a passing down of a cultural tradition (180-187). Such theories suggest that the desire for legacy and the anxiety around its absence are endemic of a neoliberal heteronormative society. It is part of cultural habitus to desire offspring that will live in our image after we die. Rather than focusing on whether or not this desire is useful or not in the LGBT community, the anxieties produced out of the desire for legacy are real and experienced by many LGBT seniors, and they remain a significant motivating factor for the donation of personal collections to LGBT archives. In this way, the archive is a surrogate for never-conceived children.

For over a year, I processed the 87 boxes of personal papers belonging to Charles Nolte. A long-time professor of theatre at the University of Minnesota and an actor on Broadway and European stages, as well as television and Hollywood films of the 1950s, Charles Nolte's collection documents the 86 years of his life through personal journals, newspaper clippings, photographs, films, lecture notes and playbills. Also in the collection are recordings of the weekly interviews I conducted with Nolte, which discuss his life, the materials in the collection, and the reasons he donated his papers to the archive. Nolte began "courting" – his word – the Tretter Collection as soon as the university founded the archive in 2001. For years, Nolte attended events at the library and made small monetary donations with the hope that one day Jean Tretter would express an

interest in his papers. In 2008, he was performing in *Exit Strategy* in the semi-autobiographical role of an aging gay theatre professor and former actor when he was diagnosed with cancer. His health declined rapidly and by February 2009, he explained, he thought he was going to die and wanted to quickly find a home for his papers before it was too late. Frustrated that nobody from the Tretter Collection or University Libraries had expressed an interest in his papers, he called Tretter and said "I'm dying. Do you want this stuff or not?" I asked Nolte why he chose the Tretter Collection, specifically an LGBT archive, over the University Archives or the Performing Arts Archive, either of which would have also been thrilled to have his papers. Nolte stated that he felt his experiences would be most interesting to scholars of gay history and believed that his papers would be accessed more in the Tretter Collection than in other units. "These papers, the journals in particular, are my children," Nolte explained. "This is what will live beyond me. I just hope that somebody someday might find something of value in there. Do you think they will?"

The question seeks reassurance just as much as Dean Goodman's photograph begs the reader to "give a hoot." These impassioned pleas can be seen as an outright refusal to die, and the life of the person is projected onto the objects in the collection. He frames the material in his collection as his children, and like children he conceived it through labor, and cared for and protected it over many years. A lot of time and energy was exerted in his lifetime in the care of his collection. For it to be "lost" after his death would have meant that labor was all for nothing, and without the material traces to be remembered by future generations, he feared his life would have meant nothing as well.

As I said before, in the absence of offspring to pass on one's legacy, the archive becomes a surrogate for the never-conceived child. But in Charles' case, he continued to worry that his life's work would not be cared for. It was not enough simply that the papers be protected in the archive. Charles needed to believe they would be accessed. He needed to feel like his life had a purpose and that it would continue to have purpose after he died. He also needed to be able to participate in how his life was being archived – in some way, to be in control of the narrative as his body became less and less controllable from the cancer. Of course, no guarantee can be made that the papers will get used, nor can any prediction be made about how they will be interpreted if they are. Indeed, some of the personal papers at the Tretter Collection have not been accessed since they were processed and put into storage, due to the lack of availability of staff and volunteers to process the collection's massive backlog of materials.

It was also not enough for Charles to simply trust that the archive would care. As far as surrogate children go, it should already be clear that the archive is entirely disinterested in the subjects of its collections, except in so far as they contribute to the archive's grand narratives on LGBT identity, in which the Tretter Collection is not alone. Charles not only feared that his collection wouldn't be accessed, or that he would be forgotten. He feared that nobody would care if it did. And this is where I came in, as the face of the archive and as a friend. I had never met Charles before his work with the archive, but we immediately bonded over our shared interests in theatre and gay histories. My weekly meetings with him were not typical of the archive's acquisition process – once the deed of gift is signed, a truck comes in, picks up the boxes, and brings them to

the archive. If, by chance, the collection is quickly processed and the donor is still reachable, they may be contacted for brief clarifications or if materials were picked up that are unwanted by the archive (eg. financial or medical records, commercial materials not related to LGBT identity like books or films, etc.). My meetings with Charles made me, the defacto archivist, his surrogate child – a role I gladly played. I did and do care about him, and through the archive, he knew that as long as I was alive, someone would know about his life and the materials he left behind.

In her book *Destination Cultures*, Barbra Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests that when objects are removed from their context to be studied – in her case, ethonographic objects destined for various types of museums – there is a gesture of detachment. A vase, for example, is detached from its context as a vessel sitting on a particular mantelpiece, in a particular house, holding particular flowers that might mean something to particular people, and instead is categorized within genres of art, or used as an example to describe vase-making techniques, or is made to speak to a particular culture or social practice. But in this detachment, there can also be a refusal for objects and their context to die, because they continue to perform their existence (35). Somewhere between Dean Goodman's inscription to "give a hoot" and my own memories of Charles Nolte, these materials resist death, at least for now, and this resistance – the insistence that we recognize a whole, complex human being that had unknown secrets and desires and whose life is only barely captured in the material remains filling the boxes – disrupts the archive's ability to dismiss the individual person in favor of larger grand narratives. This gesture of resisting death, or at least living on through material remains, is a particularly queer one,

especially within the context of Edelmann's *No Future* which critiques the heteronormative cultural insistence of living on through children. Here, the archive can potentially offer an alternative means of satisfying the human desire for legacy that doesn't depend on sexual reproduction.

The Queerness of Abundance

A cursory rummage through the artifacts shelves of the Tretter Collection will reveal several items that cause one to pause. On the top shelf of the back wall, for example, are cheap plastic and ceramic busts of William Shakespeare and Winston Churchill, along with a white plaster bookend of a seated Egyptian pharaoh with a price tag from TJ MAXX for $19.99. A brassy coin in a nearby bag is labeled "Tetricus I, 270-273 A.D." Beside it is a rectangular archival storage box, over a foot in length, labeled "Fertility Fetish, Shipibo Tribe, Peruvian Amazon." Nearby on a table of books waiting to be shelved are biographies of Emily Dickinson, Abraham Lincoln and Joan of Arc – nothing old or rare, but the kinds of books you'd find in bulk in the discount nonfiction section of your local Barnes and Noble. There is no clear logic that connects all of these objects, though it can be assumed that their presence in the archive suggests that they speak to LGBT history or culture. However, lacking any sort of interpretation beyond the brief (if any) label, I'm left standing in the middle of an aisle with a sense of confusion, overwhelmed by the abundance of material. I am not unfamiliar with traditional LGBT histories, but, like many who visit the archive's storage area, I cannot make the links between a lot of the materials I see and the histories I feel like I understand. And there is

nobody and nothing here to interpret it for me. There is only the abundance of material, overflowing from the shelves into the aisles and down the length of the cavern's hallway.

When Jean Tretter was still the curator of the collection, none of these materials on the artifact shelves were catalogued in a finding aid. In fact, the bulk of the materials in the collection, even those that have been sorted and filed in archival boxes, are not included in a finding aid or in the university's library catalogue. "It's a matter of money and time," Tretter acknowledged to me when I interviewed him in 2010. He explained that each book that gets sent to the library's cataloguing system costs over $30 to process, limiting the archive to sending 24 books a month. At present, Tretter's 'priority' list of books to be sent to cataloguing would take over two years to complete, and still wouldn't begin to scratch the surface of the backlog. The collection depends largely on volunteers to process its collections and create finding aids. The process is slow, and materials can spend years sitting on shelves before processing, and sometimes even longer before a finding aid will be created. This meant that scholars using the Tretter Collection were greatly limited in their ability to access the archive. They had to either hope that the materials they wanted were among the 23 finding aids posted on the collection's website - covering only a small fraction of the 30,000+ materials in the collection – or the scholar had to somehow know in advance that the material they were looking for is held in the archive. Alternatively they could contact Jean Tretter directly, describe their project, and Tretter would pull:

1) all of the materials he was able to remember are in the collection
2) all of those materials which he was able to find

3) all of those materials which he believed the researcher would find relevant based on his understanding of their project

When asked about this paradox of accessibility in a public collection, Tretter was clearly frustrated about his limitations. He no longer had the time to actively collect materials due to his duties as a collections specialist for the archive (the vast majority of the collection's current acquisitions are unsolicited personal collections). At the same time, Tretter's fervor for collecting everything even remotely related to LGBT people had exceeded his ability to properly archive it. "In a perfect world, I would have the money to hire two people full time and we'd probably be able to get everything finished." In the field of museum studies, Tretter's dilemma is a difficult one faced by many smaller institutions, particularly in times of economic distress. Archives must balance their mission of making materials available to the public with their mission to preserve materials for the public trust. Both are not always possible at the same time. Yet even given a larger budget and a bigger space, it is not difficult to believe that the same conditions would exist for Tretter, who cannot say "no" to any item even remotely related LGBT culture. Rather than seeing this overwhelming abundance as a problem, though, I argue that it offers another productive opportunity for queer disruption.

As an avid collector of stamps and other various odds and ends since he was seven, Tretter turned his attention to materials with a gay focus that related to his own personal interests. From pornography to Scandinavian records of early gay organizations, Tretter collected with the zeal of a hoarder – purchasing items, rummaging through trash bins, and soliciting donations of items from friends and community members. The

collection quickly grew to fill his entire apartment, and Tretter became something of a cult figure in the community. Scholars and students would occasionally ask to visit his home to conduct research, and if someone in the community had a question about gay or lesbian history, they would often be referred to Jean.

By the late 1990s, the collection had completely taken over Tretter's St. Paul apartment. With books, periodicals, artwork and manuscripts piled floor to ceiling, there was just enough room for Tretter to unroll a sleeping bag on the floor each night. Meanwhile, the University of Minnesota's attitudes towards gay culture had changed with the growth of GLBT studies programs in American colleges and universities. By 2000, the university was expanding its cultural studies programs and was seeking to expand its American Indian Studies department, create a Department of Asian American Studies, and establish GLBTA Studies Office that would administer a minor in the subject. At this same time, Jean Tretter was working as a registered nurse in a psychiatric hospital. One day, a patient at the hospital punched Tretter in the face, knocking him down. Concerned over the health of the aging archivist, community members lobbied the University of Minnesota to consider purchasing the collection as a supplement to their GLBT Studies program and as a sign of commitment to the community. Arguing the collection would also need to be administered by someone familiar with the materials and history, they also persuaded the university to hire Tretter as a part-time collections specialist. If a student went into the library asking for information about the Stonewall Riots, the community members argued, they would likely be directed to information about Stonewall Jackson and the Civil War, rather than the Greenwich Village riots that

sparked the modern gay rights movement. The university named the collection after Tretter, and gave him largely unrestricted and unmonitored access to the collection for the next decade, where he has used the resources of the university to shape the archive and its programming into one of the largest collections of its kind in the Midwest, and indeed the world. Jean Tretter's archive represents his ongoing attempt to demonstrate the existence and persistence of LGBT people around the world and throughout history. Its intended mission, like the ONE and Lesbian Herstory Archives, is to document and promote the history and culture of non-heterosexual sexual identities, and preserve the collection for years to come.

Post-modern and queer criticism questions the archive's ability to 'preserve for the public trust,' because, as Foucault writes for example, the archive is not a space of preservation, but a space of limitation, defining at the outset what can be known about any given event (129). Thus, there is something particularly fascinating about the overwhelming abundance of materials in the Tretter Collection, materials which spill out of the semi-organized shelves and stacks on the floor and in the hallways. Beyond the general principle that acquisitions contribute to the understanding of LGBT identity, the vast majority of the archive is largely undefined, lacking any interpretation from a finding aid, a catalogue description, an acquisition statement, or sometimes even an identification label. The absence of interpretation and the abundance of material opens the archive to the queer possibility to encounter anything in this space. Liberated from an ordering logic, the archive poses more questions than it answers. What do you have? How do I know what to ask to see if I don't know what you have? Where can I find such-and-such

box? What is this doing down here? Where did it come from? What does it mean? What does it do? How does it change my understanding of sexual identity? How does it change me? Is it immediately recognizable as an object speaking to LGBT identity? Does it need to? It is true that these questions can be asked of any archive, but an archive that fails to be functional in the traditional sense – an archive that is impossible – insists that any engagement begin by provoking questions that may not be answerable. In this way, the impossible archive – the archive of queer possibility – provokes questions rather than answering them.

This is not an archival model that institutions tend to find valuable. Tretter's zealous approach to acquiring and his inability to organize it intelligibly for visitors to the collection means that, from a traditional archival perspective, the collection is doing a great disservice to the public. The only individual who might know why these items are in the collection and where they come from is the 68-year old retired collections specialist, Jean Tretter, who is currently suffering from health problems. Tretter recognized the problems this may cause to whoever will take over from him in the future. In my interview with him in 2010, he expressed his desire to do more to document what is in the collection, but that he is unable to do as much as he'd like due to his schedule. "In the last years of Jim Kepner's life, I've heard they sat him down in front of a computer and said 'type out everything you know so we don't lose it when you're gone,'" Tretter recalled, adding he hoped to be able to spend more time on new acquisitions once his health allows him to return to the collection as a volunteer. "Then I won't have the e-mails, or the meetings, or the reading room duties to worry about."

Then everything changed. In the months following my interview with Tretter, his health worsened and a recent graduate in urban planning, Stewart Van Cleve, who had been hired with donated money to catalogue an organizational collection, stepped in as a semi-official temporary replacement until a more permanent replacement could be found. After a few months, Lisa Vecoli, a long-time member of the Tretter Community Advisory Committee and former Director of Community Relations with the Minneapolis Institute of Art, was hired first as a temporary then permanent curator for the collection. The library staff all cared immensely about Tretter and his health, and yet, it was not a secret – least of all to Jean – that they were eager for him to step aside, both for the sake of his health and also for the good of the collection. The difficulty using the collection, the disorganization of the cavern, the lack of visibility on what was actually in the collection – all of this posed a problem for the University of Minnesota Libraries. Like most institutions that run archives, the value of an archival collection is primarily measured by the frequency with which it is used, the amount of donations it is able to bring in, and, to a degree, the extent to which the archives are cited within academic works. The Tretter Collection was not reaching its potential. It is true that Jean had amassed one of the largest collections of LGBT materials in the world with a truly international scope, and yet nobody, including the libraries staff, was entirely sure what was there. Tretter did not have receipts or deeds of gift for all of the materials – which he would have had to run by his supervisors for approval. They knew that, to some extent, Jean was sneaking material into the collection because he couldn't bear the thought of it being thrown away or lost to the archive. To a degree, the libraries permitted this because

they didn't want to upset Jean, who, even after many years at the university, was still used to grassroots archival practices that rarely considered details like deeds of gift. Given time, Jean would retire, and the "problem" of the archive could be dealt with then.

Over the past couple of years, order and logic have slowly found there way into the chaos of the archive - first through Stewart Van Cleve, but largely under Lisa Vecoli. New acquisitions have been dramatically scaled back while much of the backlog is processed under Vecoli's supervision. Some items which do not have a clear connection to LGBT history or culture, or which take up valuable space with limited perceived research value, are quietly removed. In many archives, this would require a formal deaccessioning process, but because much of the collection lacks deeds of gift, the libraries can argue that there was never a formal agreement to hold the materials. Now the collection has over a hundred finding aids published on their website with more coming on a monthly basis, compared to the less than ten that existed through much of Tretter's tenure. The hallways outside the cavern have been cleared. Vecoli has even created an extensive spreadsheet database that has begun to document everything in storage, including boxes that have been sitting untouched off-site for years. Recently, Vecoli applied for and received a $256,000 grant to conduct a series of oral history interviews with the trans* community, in an effort to address a large gap in the collection's holdings.[35] Archivable trans* materials can be difficult to find, as there isn't the same volume of printed records – newspapers, magazines, etc. – that exist in gay and

[35] Trans* is currently the umbrella term that refers to all identities within the gender identity spectrum. It is meant to include such terms as transgender, transvestite, transsexual, trans man, trans woman, genderfuck, genderless, non-gendered, bigender, genderfluid, third gender, and others. See Sam Killermann's *The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook: A Guide to Gender* (2013).

lesbian communities. In the coming year, Vecoli also hopes to expand the collection's bi/pan/omni-sexual holdings. The results of this reorganization and new approach are immediately visible and calculable. Use of the archive has increased dramatically, and Vecoli has applied for and received substantial grants that build off of her work to make the entire collection available for scholars. In many ways, she has begun to fulfill Tretter's vision of creating a massive, internationally-recognized collection of LGBT-related material, and he seems pleased by the work she is doing and the direction the archive is taking.

In several early meetings of the advisory committee – made up of Jean, Lisa, library staff, and members of the university and non-academic LGBT communities – Vecoli sought advice on whether to keep or discard some items, and she would bring materials in for discussion and debate. Once, for example, she brought samples of the collection's extensive run of International Male clothing catalogues. Between 1987 and 2007, the mail-order catalogue featured scantily-clad models hawking mesh shirts, stringy thongs, and other clothing. The company targeted men broadly, but it was particularly popular within the gay community. "Do we really need to keep the full run of catalogues?" Vecoli asked, having previously reminded the committee of the limited available shelf space. Arguing on their behalf, Tretter replied that company was very popular among gay men, and that the mailing was also a subject of erotic gaze for closeted men. Flipping through a catalogue in public or having one on your coffee table could be a signal to other gay men that you were one of them. "But do we really need all of them?" Vecoli asked again, with the familiar look of the overwhelmed archivist.

"There are boxes of these. What kind of research value do they have? Could we maybe just keep a few from each year?" I've never personally been much help in these discussions, and have privately mentioned to Vecoli how grateful I am not to have to make such decisions on a day-to-day basis. It is not an easy task, particularly in an archive as abundant as this one. I always find myself remarking that there are reasons to keep and reasons to discard nearly all of the objects Vecoli brings to the meetings. The archive is indeed short on space and there isn't currently a wide amount of scholarship focusing on such businesses as International Male. But sitting in the meeting, I could, off the top of my head, think of several research papers that could be written using them, to say nothing of a paper about what makes them so archivally interesting. This is not the stuff of typical archives. These catalogues appeared in my own mailbox at home so often that I would frequently throw them away without even glancing at them. For the majority of people, they are garbage, and yet for at least one person, they were important enough to keep, to organize chronologically, and to file away in acid-free archive-quality Hollinger boxes.

Even the act of trying to manage the archive's abundance provokes useful questions about the practice of archiving. Should material only ever be archived if an archivist can perceive a research project that might use them? How can an archivist account for research projects that are, as yet, unimaginable? Can there be value in disorder? Is it possible to archive for a queer future as well as an LGBT past? How are the decisions about what is kept or discarded (or what is even acquired in the first place) concealed or made visible?

Knowing such decisions are made in archives everywhere, my goal is not to validate one approach over another. This is the ever-changing dynamic of archival organization playing itself out – two different forms of archival imagination chafing against one another. The newly organized archive has become a remarkable resource in my teaching and in my scholarship in LGBT theatre and performance. I have a better sense of what is available in the collection, and when requests are made to see the material, more often than not that material can actually be located and brought to the reading room. The logical narratives of LGBT histories and culture that I came to the archive with are affirmed by the ordering logic of the collections. Now more than ever, the archive is able to give shape to LGBT identity. What is lost in this, though, is that sense of being able to understand sexual identity in ways that weren't familiar – in ways that I hadn't considered before coming to the archive. I confess that I miss the chaos and impossibility of the way the archive was. It is more difficult, though not impossible, to take the elevators down into the caverns and to be overwhelmed and disturbed. The burden of being surprised has shifted from the archive onto the visitor. Now, to find queer moments where logic and order are disrupted, you have to seek them out.

When the Archive's A'Rockin'… Keeping the Sex in the Sexuality

Further along the shelf – past the busts of Shakespeare and Churchill, beyond the box of Dean Goodman papers – is another gray archival storage box. Blending in with the other boxes on the shelf, my eye caught sight of the label as I took it down from its perch. "Anal Self-Stimulation Materials," the label on the box reads. "Anonymous Donation."

Inside the box is a black butt plug, an open, partially used jar of Elbow Grease brand personal lubricant, an unopened jar of Men's Cream brand personal lubricant, and a receipt from Castro Gulch (a San Francisco adult novelty store) for 3 adult DVDs and a jar of Elbow Grease lubricant, totaling $214.80. Though the box is labeled as an anonymous donation, the receipt was paid with a credit card, and bears the name of its owner.

"What the hell does that have to do with gay culture?" a gay friend asked when I told him about the box later that evening. Having been down into the archive once before, and having seen a comparatively small amount of the collection's vast gay male porn collection sitting on the floor, my friend had already questioned me about the significance of different items housed in the archive.

"Well, perhaps it's keeping the sex in sexuality," I answered – unsure myself why the box was there or where it came from. "Years from now, somebody may find it interesting to know what kind of sex toys people used."

"Maybe," he admitted, though clearly skeptical. "But people are going to look at this stuff and think that sex is the only thing gay men cared about."

Though I didn't see the need to feel ashamed about the abundance of sexually explicit material in the collection, he did have a point. The archive holds fairly extensive, if not complete, collections of gay erotic publications from *Playgirl* to *Honcho* to *Latin Inches*. Interspersed with gay-themed films like *Philadelphia* and *Milk*, are erotic films like *Black Balled* and *Fantasy Fuckers* which significantly outnumber non-erotic films in the collection. The presence of some erotic material that includes under-age children has

been a hotly debated inclusion to the collection among those who are aware that it is in the archive. Often donated to the collection along with personal papers, erotica makes up one of the largest genres of material in the Tretter holdings. What does this say about LGBT identity?

Jean Tretter acknowledged that the porn collection is a subject he has had to regularly fight about with the Tretter Collection Advisory Committee. In the past, committee members have questioned why the erotica is there, why they are still collecting it, why erotica makes up such a large percentage of the collection, why the erotica focuses mainly on gay men, and why, when faced with limited space in the archive, is it not sent to the off-site storage facility. Tretter is adamant, however, that the erotica not be separated from the rest of the collection.[36] "The idea behind this collection is still to prove that history and culture in the GLBT society exists. To that end, you have to have a certain amount of erotica in it, because that's the basis on which culture in this society existed because it's a same-sex attraction." To state that erotica is the basis on which GLBT culture exists is an interesting claim. For Tretter, it is erotica – the material production of sex and not sex itself – which is the basis for GLBT culture, and clearly this is reflected by the amount within the collection.

When asked how often the erotic materials get used, Jean insists that there is a demand, though he is not able or willing to estimate how often. He often tells of a young male student researching gay gangs in major metropolitan cities. Gang members could be identified by specific kinds of tattoos on their bodies. To be able to see who was in a

[36] The porn magazines, for example, are filed alphabetically along with other periodicals in the collection. *Honcho* is archived near the newsletters from the Human Rights Campaign.

gang and track them through different times, the student used the erotica in the collection coupled with internet databases of porn stars to get information about gang members. He reminds the advisory committee of such requests whenever they suggest moving some or all of the erotic materials off-site.

I had to ask about the "Anal Self-Stimulation Materials" box. What, I ask him, do these materials say about gay identity?

"Well, it also says something about how we got it," he says with a laugh. "That was part of a donation from a funeral home. What happened was this poor guy…this elderly gentleman was on his way home from an adult video store, had a heart attack, and died. He was delivered to the funeral home with this bag of stuff. The funeral home asked his relatives if they wanted it, and they said 'No, just get rid of it' or 'throw it away' or whatever, but being a conscientious group – these were unopened DVDs and the one jar hadn't been used, and one hopes, at least that the butt plug was never used…"

"…although the other jar leaves that a little suspect," I interjected.

"Yeah. But one day I get a phone call saying they've got this stuff and do we want it, and we said sure…. And so that's how we got it. So I just thought it needs to be kept together. The DVDs and the magazines can go in with the rest of the stuff, but this whole little thing should be kept together in honor of some poor little guy who never quite made it home."

Like the International Male catalogues mentioned earlier, the relevance of this box to an LGBT archive has been called into questions. After all, what research value could it have, especially without the story to explain its provenance? As I stated

previously, such materials as this box are transformed and given life through its interpretation. Yet without interpretation, its randomness and overt sexuality – had it really been up some guy's ass? - is provocative. Its value – if such economically-laden terms must be used – is not in whether it can be the subject of extensive research, but rather in appearing where it was not expected. Perhaps it would incite laughter, anger, or lust. Perhaps it is a monument to a forgotten man, or to the archive's founder who delighted in finding heroism in stories such as this. This box suggests a non-homonormative queerness that is socially vulgar, and not what many want associated with the LGBT individual of moral repute. The inability for this object to exist in a "proper archive" is a reminder of the limited predetermination of archival materials, where cleanliness is a virtue and the unexpected is frowned upon.

As I mentioned, following Tretter's retirement, Stewart Van Cleve began the work of imposing a logic onto the collection. Digging through boxes of unprocessed materials tucked away in storage, he unexpectedly found a series of twenty-one boxes filled with underwear. Each pair of underwear had been carefully folded and placed into separate zip-loc bags – some with dates, names and/or locations written on them. Stewart was perplexed. As he described it, he had spent days going through boxes and kept running into random stuff that he couldn't explain. Twenty-one boxes, though, represented not a small amount of storage area. He called Jean who explained that they had been donated by a man who had an underwear fetish. Most of the collection was from the 1970s and 1980s, and included used underwear the man had purchased, had acquired as sexual trophies, and in some cases, underwear that the man had stolen from

gym lockers. It was clear all the underwear had been used, but it wasn't clear if they were clean.

I happened to be processing Charles Nolte's personal papers at the archive when Stewart made this discovery. "I don't want to touch them," he told me. "This is really disgusting. I'm also offended that this is even there. I don't want people thinking this is what it means to be a gay man. This isn't who I am."

"Twenty-one boxes, did you say?" I couldn't conceal my fascination. "That's a LOT of underwear!"

Stewart's initial reaction of disgust and shame provided him with the productive opportunity to be able to express something about his own experience of his sexual identity in opposition to the material he had found. The underwear fetish was not connected with him, was not part of his experience, and his expressed desire to not be associated with it offered a nuanced expression of male homosexuality – both men, Stewart and the unnamed donor, identified as gay, but clearly had different experiences and expectations of what this meant.

Where Stewart reacted to the unexpected with disgust, I reacted with awe. I loved the idea that this collection was down there, but then, as a performance studies scholar I'm particularly drawn to the archive's non-textual holdings. I delighted in the queerness of erotic discovery and in Jean's transgression of hiding these boxes in the collection. The underwear reminded me of a recently published biography called *Secret Historian* about Samuel Steward, a latter-day gay Renaissance man born in 1909 and who had written the name, date, physical attributes, and description of his sexual exploits for most

of his adult life on index cards. The cards include famous celebrities and unknown workers, describing in erotic detail their tattoos and body markings, as well as the details of their sexual trysts. Such records are rarely kept, and even more rarely found in an archive. Encountering the unexpected is a queer reminder of the diversity of human experience, and that even in spite of an abundance of documentation, there is always more to any story. Stewart eventually brought the boxes to the head of the library archives, who then consulted with the chair of the collection's advisory committee, a scholar of Lesbian literature. It was decided that, since the collection did not have a deed of gift where the libraries would then be obligated to care for it, they would keep a "representative selection" and explain in some future finding aid that it was part of a larger collection. Stewart was left to figure out what a representative selection meant – Color? Style? Date? Not wanting to paw through them, he kept a few that immediately stood out and discarded the rest.

Where some objects are removed because of questions of research value or space, objects such as these are removed, at least to some degree, because of shame. Queer theorists such as Eve Sedgwick have argued that shame is part of the process of identity formation that should not be quickly dismissed (142). The moment that shame is experienced is the moment when a desired connection is refused. Encountering shame through sex toys and pornography in the LGBT archive can be a moment that defines a limit on how an individual recognizes their identity or there sense of belonging – "I identify with the Gertrude Stein and Truman Capote parts of this archive, not with *Honcho* and International Male." Such moments, when reflected on, can be helpful in

understanding how a person perceives their own identity and the idea of LGBT community. It is a revelation of *habitus*, expressing the social patterns – morality, value, economy, etc – that they personally relate to and operate within, and, if desired, can provide the possibility for challenging these perceptions.

Encountering the Unexpected: Towards the Queer Archive

What happens when you don't see yourself or your vision of the world affirmed within the archive? What if, instead, you encounter disorder, several boxes of used underwear, Winston Churchill and a flyswatter? The effect can be unsettling. By and large, archives are organized to avoid unsettling moments. Its organization is carefully determined and expressed through mission statements, catalogues, and finding aids. You should, in theory, always be able to find what you are looking for.

LGBT archives seek to document the experiences of men who love men, women who love women, and those who historically deviate from gender norms. Yet, the histories that often emerge from these archives situate the homosexual-as-citizen within the framework of neoliberal economies. Corporations participate in Pride festivals and donate to LGBT causes to appeal to a market that is believed to have a larger disposable income than families with children. Discussions of 'marriage equality' are frequently framed within the context of the significant boost to individual state economies by allowing same-sex partners to marry. The LGBT person achieves acceptance in neoliberal society by marking the ways they contribute to and participate in the economy. Queer histories, which do not have acceptance as an ultimate aim, attempt to disrupt the

habitus of this framework. The Tretter Collection is not a queer archive, but the moments when it fails to fit into the established concept of what an LGBT archive is, what it collects, or how it operates, offer a sense of queer possibility. The archive's burgeoning shelves of the unexpected, of trash or the academically useless, call into question the objects that do seem to belong. When Tretter curated the collection, there was no system of inclusion or exclusion, only a system of attachment. *Everything* had value. Research agendas, storage limitations, and organization be damned.

Even after the flyswatter, butt plugs, and boxes of underwear have been removed, the queer possibilities of encountering the unexpected still remain. Sometimes this can be seen through the intense expressions of desire embedded in the archive's various personal collections. Other times it can be seen in the sheer abundance of materials and the inability to make an ordered logic out of it. And sometimes they can be seen in the moments where the unexpected is encountered, and all the reactions we go through when it happens. The queerness of the archive operates in the objects that are difficult to explain – that surprise and confuse. Archival problems allow for moments of queer possibility. In my next chapter, I will dig further into this concept, to see in what ways archives can not only offer moments of queer possibility, but can be queer themselves.

Chapter IV

Toward the Queer Archive: The Jack Smith Archive

"Art must not be used anymore as another elaborate means of fleeing from thinking because of the multiplying amount of information each person needs to process in order to come to any kind of decision about what kind of planet one wants to live on before business, religion, and government succeed in blowing it out of the solar system."

- Jack Smith, *LAICA* Journal #19, June/July 1978

"Juvenile does not equal shameful and trash is the material of creators."

- Jack Smith, *Film Culture* #27, Winter 1962/1963

Queer filmmaker and performance artist Jack Smith died from complications relating to AIDS on September 25,1989. He left no will or directive for the management of his estate. Smith has been cited as an inspiration by a litany of celebrated artists including Lou Reed, Laurie Anderson, Andy Warhol, Richard Foreman and John Waters, yet, at the time of his death, few but his closest friends remembered him. All his life, Smith was committed to creating provocative art that both seduced and challenged audiences. He resisted labels to such extremes that when the New York Police Department vilified his highly sexual film *Flaming Creatures* (1962) and noted cultural critic Susan Sontag widely celebrated it, Smith disavowed both and withdrew his first and only "popular" work from circulation. Smith's approach to art made it necessarily difficult for people to understand what he was doing – necessary because he was intentionally creating work that resisted interpretation – and so few people outside of underground art circles took notice of him. During his career, Smith passed on a number

of commercial projects that would have likely led to great fame and fortune – Smith was often scraping by on meager bits of food, discarded items and odd jobs – but he felt that taking those projects on would be selling out.[37] It is not a stretch to state that he died in economic poverty and relative obscurity. It is also not a stretch to state that since Smith's death, the collection of work he left behind has brought him an ever-growing iconic status that was never realized during his lifetime.

After Smith died, his close friend Penny Arcade – a Warhol superstar and performance artist in her own right – went to Smith's sixth-floor walk-up to salvage what she could before the landlord got to it. For over a decade prior to his death, Smith had been slowly and meticulously transforming his apartment into a film set, *Sinbad in the Rented World*, which was never completed. The bathroom had been converted into a Tahitian garden of plastic plants. Squared doorframes were transformed into Moorish arches, and a large painting of a three-breasted Scheherazade – complete with custom-made brassiere – adorned the living room wall (Arcade 2010). Much of Smith's work had a decidedly orientalist style to it, gesturing to the lush Hollywood B-movies made in the 1940s, which performance scholar José Muñoz has argued reflected a critique of Hollywood cultural consumption, rather than an uncritical perpetuation of stereotypes (Muñoz x). Arcade took what she could from the apartment, filling the storage space in her own apartment's basement where Smith's collection would remain for much of the 1990s. With the help of *Village Voice* film critic J. Hoberman, Arcade established The Plaster Foundation to promote and preserve Smith's work. In 1998, she helped coordinate

[37] Smith was highly critical of the commercial art that made people like Warhol and Waters household names. When beatnik poet and photographer Allan Ginsburg visited Smith in the hospital, Smith referred to him as a "walking career." (Arcade 2010)

retrospectives of his art at P.S. 1 in New York and the Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh in 1998, with profits going toward the preservation of the film negatives in the collection. After a widely-reported legal battle over Smith's estate between Arcade and Smith's estranged sister in the early 2000s, a judge ruled that the entire collection be sold or donated to an institution as a whole to promote and preserve the late artist's work.[38] Arcade had been trying to do this for over a decade with little luck – the film archives she approached were only interested in the film prints and negatives, but were not interested in the vast amount of props, costumes, sculptural pieces, or his writings. Libraries and archives tended to only want the written material – letters, journals, scripts, random musings – but did not have the space to take the rest. Even in death, Smith's art was resisting easy classification. Following the judge's ruling, the Gladstone Gallery – a private art gallery in New York specializing in mid-to-late 20th century avant garde art – expressed an interest in purchasing the entire collection outright. In June 2008, Smith's sister sold the collection to the Gladstone Gallery for an undisclosed sum. In a press release, the gallery proclaimed Jack Smith a "visionary" of the "New York underground avant-garde," demonstrated by the 1998 retrospectives Arcade had organized at P.S. 1 and the Warhol Museum. "Gladstone Gallery will seek the guidance and insight of curators, scholars, friends, colleagues, and artists to present this important oeuvre in a manner respecting the fascinating and singular life of Jack Smith."

In March, 2012, prior to a research trip for this dissertation, I reached out to Daniel Feinberg, the Artist Liaison at the Gladstone Gallery who oversees the Smith archive. I explained that I was interested in Smith's work as a scholar of queer

[38] See Carr (2004), Arcade (2010), Hoberman (2011) for details of the legal dispute.

performance and art, and asked if it would be possible to see what was in the collection. "The Jack Smith Archive exists as a resource for curators to preview work for possible loan to exhibitions," Feinberg replied in an e-mail, "as well as an internal Archive for the gallery's own research, restoration, and presentation of the material, of course, but it is not set-up for academic or scholastic research" (Feinberg Email Feb 10, 2012). After explaining that I wasn't interested in conducting "traditional research" at the archive, but rather just wanted to get a sense of what was there and how it was organized, I was invited to send a lengthy description of my research project which would then be reviewed by the gallery's owner Barbara Gladstone. The proposal was reviewed, but the response reaffirmed that the gallery was not set-up for academic research.

> "We are in the process of preparing all of the non-art object material to present to the Fales Library at NYU, where hopefully the Jack Smith papers, correspondence, notes, scripts, and other material that is not art work, can be viewed and studied in depth. As we are a commercial art gallery, our ability and context does not allow us to properly, which is to say, academically, prepare this material for students and professors. We are working thoroughly and quickly to have this important aspect of the Archive available to present to NYU" (Feinberg Email Feb 16, 2012).

Feinberg could confirm generally that the collection housed a number of Smith's writings, photographs, films, props, and costumes, but that there was no complete finding aid or inventory of the contents of the collection.

Without being able to physically see the collection, Feinberg hinted at how the Gallery has been able to cope with the challenge of classifying the difficult-to-classify. The entire collection has been separated into at least two distinct categories – items with artistic merit that could be used for art exhibits, and items with academic research value that fit within the expected parameters of an academic research archive such as the found at New York University. Since the Gladstone Gallery is a private collection and is not obligated to maintain the archive as a whole, items that fall out of either category can be discarded.

When approaching Smith's work from an archival standpoint, there are at least three ways to proceed. One is to burn it all, which was originally Smith's desire (Arcade 2010). He feared the thought of "ending up in a vault," was convinced that his collection would have little meaning without his ability to engage with the material, and argued that if the world could not appreciate his work while he was alive, they didn't deserve it after he was dead. A second approach is to create an archive that figures Smith as the genealogical father figure of American underground cinema and queer performance art. This has been Arcade's (and now Gladstone's) project since the beginning, and through the interpretation of the collection and its various exhibitions, Smith stands as the central branch of a queer performance family tree, a precursor to Warhol and Waters and a citational reference for artists like Carmelita Tropicana and Ron Vawter. A third approach to archiving Smith's collection is to see the objects not as a monument to Smith, but to engage with them in the kind of queer artistic practice of disruption that has been Smith's life work.

While the Gladstone Gallery has chosen their route, I want to explore what the third approach might have looked like as a way of thinking about and through the concept of queer archiving and queer research. In other words, rather than look at how Smith's collection can serve as an example of cultural production (creating an archival monument to Jack Smith), I am interested in the archive as an *interruption* in the very possibility of cultural (re)production. For an artist like Smith who resisted interpretation and classification, finding him in a modern archive whose primary aims include interpretation and classification seems counterintuitive, to put it mildly.

Smith sought to provoke through his work, to find the beauty in the unexpected, to question norms he saw as stagnant and decaying, and to resist capitalism, landlordism and the camp-as-consumption gay culture. The details of his art works are necessarily difficult to describe. Scripts served as mere guidelines to performances where entire sections of dialogue and action would be created, re-worked and destroyed on the spot. Smith was so committed to the disruptive nature of art, he ensured his work was always alterable at any given moment. If one attended a performance of his two nights in a row, the only constant *might* be the title. Spontaneity trumped structure, and it was not uncommon for Smith to replay a scene a dozen times during the performance, making adjustments until it worked. Even his films were dynamically different with each screening. Smith could often be found in the back room of film houses shortly before showing his films. There, he would re-edit the entire film – splicing negatives, adding frames and connecting it all with thin strips of tape.

Just as it is difficult to describe Smith's work, his ongoing commitment to disruption also makes it difficult to analyze it – to ever have a moment where it is possible to say: "Aha! This is what happened in the performance. This is what Smith was trying to do." Not wanting to be limited by labels, he would choose that moment where he sensed an audience becoming comfortable and familiar with his work to radically change it. Thus, I am aware of the irony in claiming that Smith's work was a queer challenge to the stabilizing force of identity, allowing audiences to see the world in ever-changing ways. I believe it was doing that. I also believe it was about beauty, intentional escapism, exoticism and fetish. It was about Hollywood B-movies and gay life in the Lower East Side. It was about garbage and drugs; Christmas and fucking. It was all of these things and more, and that is exactly the point. It was many things in any given moment, and in the next it would be something entirely different. This is a concept anathema to the archive, where to catalogue requires a gesture of stillness.

Take, for example, Smith's 1963 film that made Smith publicly known and notorious - *Flaming Creatures*. Featuring billowing fabric, gender ambiguity, vampirism, orgasmic earthquakes that destroy mountain villages, undead dancing and graphic sex scenes, the film was screened at the Senate confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Chief Justice nominee Abe Fortas as an example of the kind of material Fortas had upheld as not constituting obscenity. The original reel was seized by police at its premier in New York City, and was officially banned in the state by a New York Criminal Court for indecency. The controversial film established Smith nationwide as a serious member

of the underground alternative film scene. A copy of *Flaming Creatures* still exists, edited by Smith for a final time before its current, ultimate state.

In one scene, for example, a wooden coffin lies on the ground. The lid slowly slides off from the inside by a hand with long fingers and manicured nails. Inside is a beautiful blonde transvestite vampire, wearing a formal evening gown that may be made from a sheet and clutching a bouquet of plastic lilies. She sits up slowly in the coffin with her eyes rolled back in her head while a song reminiscent of Patsy Cline and flea markets underscores the action. The camera pans down to reveal a man - dead? passed out? asleep? - at the foot of the coffin. Sitting up, the transvestite vampire starts wildly shaking the upper half of her body - limbs, head, breasts. She gets up, steps over the curled up body of the man, and starts to dance with her bouquet to the country music, which sings of Honkey Tonk Angels. Gauzy, billowing fabric in the background gives the setting a dream-like quality. A church bell starts to toll as the transvestite vampire starts rubbing her body with the lilies. She throws herself onto the body of the man and starts sucking or biting his neck while petting the other side of his face with the long, bejeweled fingers wrapped around the man's head. The man is unresponsive. Rolling away from the man in ecstasy, the transvestite vampire stares up into the sky, mouth open wide. The camera shifts to show the man's eyes suddenly open. Pulling back, we see the transvestite vampire lying beside the man, twisting her body to reach over and grab the breast of the man, which she massages. Some kind of large glass lantern, like one found in an old church - sits on the man's torso, preventing the transvestite vampire's leg from wrapping around the man's lower half. Church bells continue to ring as the camera

reveals the two still lying next to each other, but now the dress of the transvestite vampire has been pulled up, and her nylons pulled down. S/he starts masturbating his/her penis. The camera cuts away and a new song starts to play - sounding like a polka version of Cole Porter. The man and the transvestite vampire are now seen dancing, shot with the camera from above. They waltz and spin while looking up into the camera in either ecstasy or agony - or both.

It is difficult to say anything of this scene, or the film for that matter, which is made up of scenarios equally challenging to explain. And that's the point. There is certainly something happening in this film – action, characters, emotional subtext, soundscapes, beauty, sex, trash, beautiful sexy trash – though the moment anything resembling Aristotealian narrative emerges, something wildly different interrupts and refuses a comfortable plot, and the previous scene and characters never reappear. The rough editing of the film, often causing distortions in the soundscore, is a reminder that the various scenes of the film would have been shown in different orders, with different images and actions spliced in or taken out. The film plays on many familiar elements – vampires, the exotic, country music, beauty – and twists them around to make them unfamiliar. Queer.

In my previous chapter on the University of Minnesota's Tretter Collection, I explored how a modern archive can be 'accidentally' queer through various encounters with the unexpected and uncontainable – emotion, abundance, sexuality, dreams. In this chapter, I want to look at a collection that is inherently queer and theorize how its queerness can be kept active when the archive's stabilizing logics of ordering normally

kill it. At stake here is the belief that there can be a place an individual can go to where, instead of having their vision of the world constructed and affirmed through the material they encounter, the individual can experience a transformation of their world view. We live in a culture where it seems increasingly difficult to see ourselves, our society, our politics, etc. in different ways. We get locked into static understandings of the world that make us complacent, and limit our ability to act. In the recent debates around same-sex marriage in the United States, the political conversation was largely limited to those who were for or against marriage. Rarely were other alternatives considered – for example, at no point in the mainstream media did anyone ask what role governments have in sanctioning romantic relationships in the first place, homosexual or otherwise. Within the LGBT community, it was expected that people would support same-sex marriage, and those who didn't were either self-hating or homophobic. It became increasingly impossible for people to think outside the binary of either having marriage or not having marriage – being with us, or against us. We need to queer, as a verb, as a practice that seeks to open up other ways of thinking/being in the world. Smith was invested in queer practices throughout his career and the sale of his collection to the Gladstone Gallery offers an opportunity to rethink the ways we approach the archive.

This chapter begins with an explanation of how I am conceiving the term queer and the concept of queer research. Then I look at what about Smith's work is specifically queer, particularly by examining his relationship to the objects he used in his films and performances. Smith salvaged many of these objects from dumpsters, and I use contemporary critical theory on the vitality of objects and trash to explain how these

objects resist the stabilizing gesture of the modern archive. From these acts of resistance, I propose the project of queer archiving.

On Queer Research

Queer is a loaded term. It is important to mark the parameters of how I'm using the word at time when it is commonly deployed as an identity marker. At a recent meeting at a local college for "Queer Students," everyone was asked to introduce themselves. "My name is Alex," one individual said. "I am a queer cisgendered male and I use the pronouns he/him/his." In such situations, queer can be seen as an umbrella term referring to what is colloquially known as alphabet soup: LGBTQIA…. Queer is also used, particularly by younger generations, as an identity term for those who wish to acknowledge that there is more to them than what existing terms suggest. I am using the term queer as a verb that directly challenges the stable identity of nouns. Following the work of José Muñoz, William Haver and others, to queer is to transform, a performative action that is simultaneously destructive and creative. It is an interruption in the status quo. Queer is an action against normalcy. It makes the familiar strange. Because it is the *act* of transformation, queer is an ongoing process, rather than the end result. Even when I use queer as a noun or adjective, its verb-ness (its *doing*) is implied.

To that end, it is important to understand that what I am doing in this chapter is not queer research or queer theory, per se. I am trying to make sense of concepts that could *lead to* queer research and an understanding of a queer archive. The requirements of a doctorate in academia require descriptions, logics, and understandable

argumentation. My aim must be to engage with bodies of knowledge and explain them, not disrupt them. Here, I can only gesture to queer performance and queer research with the hope that it might inspire queer *doings* elsewhere. Disruption is anathema to educational institutions, which operate through the disciplinization of various fields. Queer work is safely housed in cultural studies programs and sexuality studies departments where it can be contained, and talked about *ad nauseum*. There is a danger that queer research is used as a method for the reproduction of LGBT cultures, rather than an opportunity to interrupt the (re)production of culture altogether. For queer theory and queer archiving to "work," it has to be recognized as something separate from LGBT and sexuality studies, for while it is engaged in questioning those disciplines, it cannot be relegated merely to the disruption of sexual identities. The disciplinization of these fields within the academy is what prevents holistic engagements with queer concepts in all areas of life.

In his essay "Queer Research; Or, How to Practice Invention to the Brink of Intelligibility," William Haver suggests that queer research is "characterized by the process of rendering intellectual life uncanny" and that it "does not make the world familiar or comfortable for the student or reader, but rather defamiliarizes or makes strange, queer or even cruel what we had thought to be a world" (291). This is key, because queering is not the act of replacing one identity formation with another. I argue that to exist in queer space is to exist in a state of perpetual transformation. The reality, of course, is that we do exist in a state of perpetual transformation, but we use concepts like identity to pin things down and to impose an artificial logic on an illogical world. Thus,

the "work" of queering is the expansion of individual thought and perception to *recognize* the instability of reality, rather than in the transformation of the material reality itself. An essay by Michel de Certeau recounts how fellow French philosopher Michel Foucault was once asked at a conference to identify himself and his positionality within the vast field of disciplines he wrote about. "In what capacity do you speak?" he was asked. "What is your specialty? Where are you coming from?" (193) Foucault refused to answer, insisting in his introduction to the *Archaeology of Knowledge* "Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers in order" (Foucault 17). De Certeau goes on to argue that it is identity itself which "freezes the gesture of thinking" and "pays homage to an order" (194). It is our ability to question that order, he suggests, which allows us to realize how and to what extent it may be possible to think otherwise. Queering is this gesture of thinking otherwise. It is a gesture of opening up, of recognizing the world and ourselves in its utter instability – frightening but full of limitless possibilities. Recognizing the world as unstable does not necessarily guarantee it is better, but as Haver points out, "it could not but be more interesting… than the worlds with which we are currently afflicted" (285). Even if it is not better – if we must place value in terms of good and bad – emphasizing queer transformation in daily life opens up at least the possibility of becoming unstuck.

On the Queerness of Objects

The previous chapters should make clear the ways in which archives contribute to the formation of various identity structures. The traditional archive depends on objects to be able to make claims about identities, and does so by interpreting them as static representations of historical events. But what about objects that resist such interpretation?

In the few times I have given lectures to undergraduates on the queerness of objects, I go to my office and unplug my coffee maker. Setting the machine next to the lectern, I ask the students what it is. "A coffee maker," they reply. "What does it make you think of?" I ask. They reply with a varying list of images: work, caffeine, mornings, waking up, bitterness, offices, headaches, salvation, to name a few. I point out that when we see the object in front of us, it is immediately recognizable to us as a coffee maker. We know what it is. We know what it does. We have strong associations and memories attached to it based on our own experiences of coffee and making it, though few beyond myself have any direct connection to *this* coffee maker. Our mind is so quick to identify the material world around us and to organize it into associations that it is hard to conceive of this particular object outside of our recognition of it as a coffee maker. It is at this point in our discussion that I usually ask the students to follow me outside. Once collected, I ask a student to take the coffee maker and throw it against the ground. Usually with a bit of a reluctance, a student volunteers and proceeds to shatter the object into hundreds of pieces. I suggest to the students that what is left is no longer a coffee maker – there is no possibility that what is scattered along the ground could make coffee. Rather than rushing to name it as a broken coffee maker, I ask the students to consider the

pieces as objects liberated of any name or any conceivable usefulness. It just exists. In this moment of disorientation, when our minds have not yet rushed forward to make sense of the object in front of us, we recognize that the object has the possibility of being anything and nothing at the same time. Indeed, this was the case even before we broke the object, but we generally do not notice it. In the destructive act of breaking the coffee maker, we can begin to liberate it from the identity that we imposed.

In her book *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed suggests that the process of coming to understanding is a process of orientation that begins from a place of disorientation. Citing Kant's classic essay "What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thought?," Ahmed offers the image of walking blindfolded into an unfamiliar room. You don't know where you are, or how where you are relates to the contours of the room. Kant proposes that, to begin understanding how to find your way around the room, you have to first understand the difference between the left and right sides of your body. It is only then, by feeling about, that an individual can understanding which way the body is turning and where objects are located within the space. "Space," Ahmed concludes, "becomes a question of turning, of directions taken, which not only allow things to appear, but also enable us to find our way through the world by situating ourselves in *relation* to such things" (6, emphasis added). We do not come to an object and seek to understand it on its own terms. The identity of the object is not a given part of its existence in the world. It is through our relationship to the object, the gesture of knowing it that makes it seem familiar, that we become oriented.

What if, at least for a time, we embrace disorientation? What if we allow ourselves to become lost? What if, instead of seeing something and rushing to name it, we allow ourselves to wonder at the possibility of its being? This is particularly challenging in archives, where objects are named and classified in excess. An archival object's very presence within an archive burdens it with identity. In the previous chapter on the Tretter Collection, I pointed toward moments when encountering unexpected objects can potentially become queer moments of possibility. Allowing ourselves to be become disoriented in the archive, rather than rushing to "fix it," can say more about how the archive speaks to LGBT identity than the objects themselves. How did this get here? What does it mean? As we ask such questions and begin to reorient ourselves and discover the boundaries of what belongs and what doesn't, we can critically observe the ways we understand LGBT identity in our mind. In such cases as this, queering can be seen as a practice that one can get better at over time. You do not stay in a place of disorientation, but each time you become reoriented you return with a greater level of critical awareness.

Disorientation was central to Smith's work, and I argue that one of the ways he accomplished this was by making familiar objects unfamiliar. The closest Smith came to writing a manifesto was "The Perfect Filmic Appositeness of Maria Montez." This rambling document published in the Winter 1962/1963 issue of *Film Culture* is deliberately obtuse, and I would argue that it exists itself as a disorienting object. Given the title of the article and that the issue is devoted to reviews of the works of various filmmakers, a reader could expect a treatise on the work of Hollywood B-movie star

Maria Montez. Smith isn't interested in making absolute statements, and yet he speaks volumes – disjointedly – about film and art. He writes of the power of "thoughts via images" which "always give rise to a complex of feelings, thots [sic], conjectures, speculations, etc." (32). At several points he references the power of child-like imagination, that "juvenile doesn't equal shameful," and that we become embarrassed about "trashy" films like those of Maria Montez as we grow older because we can no longer imagine ourselves in the absurd realities of those films (28). These films offered Smith years of inspiration. All of his films and performances were citational, in some way, to the crumbling plaster paradises of what he referred to as "MONTEZLAND."[39] Smith suggests that as children become adults, we become embarrassed about our sense of imagination. He does not develop this argument, of course, but I would like to take it further by proposing that a child's imagination is always seeing objects in an ever-changing multitude of ways. How often have children been given a large and expensive toy, only to become enraptured by the cardboard box it came in? In such a moment, the packaging destined for the trash is more valuable to the child than the manufactured toy. It can be a fort, a spaceship, a castle. Children recognize that the box can be all of these things and more, while also recognizing that it is also still a cardboard box. In their reality, the identity of the object can shift seamlessly from one moment to the next without issue and without question.

One possible reading of Smith's work is to suggest that his films and performances were an effort to reignite this imagination that allowed an individual to see the world in all of its possibilities, miraculous and horrifying. An example of this was the

[39] Such a description is used in many of his writings. See, for example, Smith 1962, p. 29.

trash heap that was central to Smith's living/performance space. The two-story apartment where Smith lived and worked had a large hole in the ceiling. A mountain of plaster, concrete and twisted girders had fallen to the main floor, becoming the central focal point for Smith's scenographic innovations. Village Voice film critic J. Hoberman described it in his essay "The Theatre of Jack Smith":

> This assemblage surrounded a simulated lagoon, made from an inflatable pool with plastic tubing providing a small waterfall. Further back was an upright victrola, encased in a coffin, from which issued a steady selection of scratchy, Latin, Hawaiian, and exotic mood music, Hollywood scores, occasional pop songs, or educational records. Behind this a few flats stood propped against each other to create a murky backstage area. (6)

The mountain of debris would change constantly. Sometimes, fragments of plastic Christmas trees would emerge from the concrete like a landscape of mini-trees on an industrial mountain. The visual environments Smith created from familiar bits of detritus drew on the audience's affective connections. The inflatable pool might remind you of a childhood spent splashing in the yard, or a television program where they were washing dogs outside. At the same time as an audience member makes a personal connection to the pool, they also recognize its new deployment – a lagoon in an exotic fantasy-land of beauty and destruction. Props and set pieces exist on stage or in film as objects that were both familiar and unfamiliar, recognizable and strange. Lest you think Smith would allow only two visions of an object, he frequently brought his painstakingly long productions to a screeching halt, stepped into the performance area, and physically altered its

composition – sets, actors, text, music, everything. In his published journals, Stefan Brecht – a flaneur of 1970s New York queer theatre and sometime actor – documented how Smith would change lines and specify new blocking for his actors (who were sometimes recruited from the audience). Sometimes he would disappear to another part of the apartment and return with new bits of trash repurposed as props and set pieces that were not part of the original "script." Sometimes he would demand a performer repeat a gesture over again, as slow as possible, until the movement was nearly imperceptible. He would also draw attention to the objects on stage by making small adjustments to tangled Christmas lights or rearranging road signs. In at least once instance, he wrapped himself in a shawl and pretended to vacuum the debris heap (Hoberman 6). No two performances of a production were ever the same. Again, I argue that this repeated interruption, restaging, and reimagining of objects – which Smith did by changing his and the audience's relationship to them – was a gesture towards queering reality. "The more rules broken," Smith wrote in his manifesto, "the more enriched becomes the activity as it has had to expand to include what a human view of the activity won't allow it to not include" (32).

Smith was not always successful in creating radical moments of queer disorientation for others, and perhaps he wasn't always able to do it for himself. Brecht notes on several occasions that fellow audience members fell asleep, or were too high to notice anything happening, or walked out within minutes of the show beginning. Failure is a necessary component of queering. Success is relative. If you expect to create a work of art that is disorienting only to find yourself without an audience, or that you were

unsuccessful, failure can be its own act of disorientation. Smith seemed genuinely disinterested in whether people liked his work or not, or whether they understood it. The effort to try to visualize the previously unimaginable seemed to be paramount.

Trash as Queer Objects

From the examples I've given of Smith's work, it should be clear that the objects Smith used in his performances and films were trash. Practically speaking, Smith salvaged from the dumpsters and alleys of Manhattan because he couldn't afford to buy anything new. But trash was also central to his vision of art for what it could do. Trash was the material detritus of capitalism, a subject he railed against in much of his performance work. He abhorred the concept of renting, where money was spent to *exist* without getting anything tangible in return. In the Smith bestiary of characters, moneygrubbing landlords were represented as lobsters. Ken Jacobs, a friend and early collaborator with Smith, claimed that Smith's investment in cultural and commercial trash was conditioned by "his horror of life, a deep disgust with existence. Jack indulged in it spitefully, he would plunge himself into the garbage of life [with] a hilarious and horrifying willingness to 'revel in the dumps'" (Rowe 39). Trash, Smith proclaimed, was the "material of creators" (1962 28). He imagined a disjointed anti-Capitalist utopia made of trash. In a 1978 interview for *Semiotexte*, Smith was asked if he ever thought of other types of societies. He replied:

> I can think of billions of ways for the world to be completely different… I can think of other types of societies…. Like in the middle of the city should be a

> repository of objects that people don't want anymore, which they would take to this giant junkyard. That would form an organization, a way that the city could be organized… the city organized around that. I think this center of unused objects and unwanted objects would become a center of intellectual activity. Things would grow up around it…. You take anything that you don't want and don't want to throw out and just take it to this giant place, and just leaving it and looking for something that you need… (Smith "Uncle Fishook…" 115)

Here, one of Smith's utopias envisions the center of a city as a junkyard where trash and other unwanted objects could be brought and exchanged, and that this hub would become a center of intellectual activity. He is drawn to trash because of its perceived uselessness, because it is unwanted and undesired by others. In her book, *Down in the Dumps: Place, Modernity and American Depression*, Jani Scandura notes that 1960s marketing encouraged a throwaway economy, where increasingly companies were producing products that could be used once, or briefly, then discarded. The abundance of garbage and the ability to have unneeded space in the form of landfills was even considered a sign of a healthy capitalist society (19). Consumers became producers of trash, and trash cost Smith nothing to acquire. Smith was particularly disturbed by gay culture's passionate consumption of upper-class heterosexuality. Grand opera and expensive fashion, for example, provided gay men with the opportunity to demonstrate their class and social standing to a society that looked down on them as psychologically disturbed. Rather than holding up the grand diva of opera Maria Callas as his role model like so many gay men,

Smith celebrated the other Maria – the trashy, rejected star of Technicolor, Maria Montez.

Smith was not alone in his use of trash in 1960s and 70s performance art. Other artists of the period saw the political potential of trash, including Richard Foreman, Claes Oldenburg, and Maria Irene Fornes. Reflecting on the sixties, pop artist Andy Warhol recalled

> …trashing was a skill. Knowing how to use what somebody else didn't was a trick you could really be proud of. In other decades people had sneaked into Salvation Armies or Goodwills, embarrassed that somebody might see them, but in the sixties people weren't embarrassed at all, they bragged about what they could scavenge here and there. (64)

Smith, however, felt that what he was doing was different than artists like Warhol. Smith was not creating art for commercial purposes. He felt artists like Warhol repurposed trash as art and resold it at a higher price and referred to him as a "walking career" (Arcade). Smith was not interested in making art for money. Throughout his career, he passed on a number of commercial projects that would have likely led to great fame and fortune. Recall that at the height of *Flaming Creatures*' popularity, he withdrew the film from circulation. Where some artists saw the repurposing of trash-as-art as a cheeky commentary on consumerism, Smith saw trash as a means for reconceiving the world around him.

I argue that trash objects are particularly queer objects. Trash is both familiar and unfamiliar. If we see trash at all, we recognize it as waste, but we either pass by it or it is

taken away to landfills out of sight and out of mind. In his book *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value*, Michael Thompson notes that trash is never a stable category, and that "what is refused may be recuperated into existent systems of value, even as a system of what has gone wrong" (Scandura 12). Trash's mutability of being both simultaneously valuable and worthless makes it particularly difficult to identify. In *Refuse Archaeology*, Dietmar Schmidt goes further to argue that trash exists at the border of what is culturally and psychologically possible to see. Trash is "matter out of place" in the most radical sense – it has no purpose anywhere (211). At the liminal threshold of what we are able to see, trash gestures toward what is invisible or otherwise not-yet-thinkable.

Trash in the Archive / Toward the Queer Archive

Trash poses a variety of problems and opportunities for the modern archive. The example of the Tretter Collection in the previous chapter is a classic case of one person's treasure being another person's trash. Value is one of the many-shifting facets of the trash object. It should be noted, however, that every archive I've examined in this dissertation has materials in its collection that have been salvaged from dumpsters – materials which careless or ashamed families and friends discarded, creating refuse from the refusal of their loved-one's homosexual identity. Sometimes objects enter the archive as a last-ditch effort to be spared the fate of the landfill – the Dean Goodman and Charles Nolte papers, the butt plug, etc. Sometimes they end up in the landfill anyway – the underwear collection, the International Male catalogues, etc. The archival act of acquisition ensures,

at least temporarily, that an object has value. Much like the objects in his own collection, the art world has, at various times, seen Smith himself variously as an object of trash or value.

In 1857, the German historian Johann Gustav Droysen put a twist on Leopold von Ranke's vision of the archive by putting forward an approach to history that he referred to as "a theory of remains." This theory distinguished materials that were intentionally preserved for posterity, and those "more truthful" fragments that had been accidentally or unconsciously preserved from the past (Scandura 22). Droysen's theory, which can perhaps be seen through the work of present-day archaeology – suggested that a more accurate depiction of history could be seen through the objects society discarded, rather than the ones they kept; a vision of how they were, not how they wanted to present themselves, or how they understood themselves to be. An archive of remains – an archive of trash – would be an archive of abundance. Without scope and limitation beyond collecting what others are not, the archive would fill to capacity and exceed, like the early Tretter Collection, in its ability to interpret the objects. Free of interpretation, they exist at that threshold of our awareness, present but unintelligible. A problem. An interruption in the order of things.

If we take Smith's collection and value it as art, it becomes a monument to Smith the artist. The trash-as-art(ifact) has a clear purpose. Its presence in the Gladstone Gallery assures its identity as art - expensive, exclusive art to be consumed during the occasional showing along with glasses of wine and hand-held canapes. Smith's worst fears of his work have been realized.

The institutional archive depends on a perception of the object as stable. It is always there, in a box or on a shelf, preserved in such a way as to ensure that the object appears nearly identical with each limited scrutiny. This stability allows for the scientific history of testing that von Ranke originally proposed – the archival objects are the scientific control that hypotheses can be tested against. The acquisition of an object into the archive is a gesture of death, of creating stability and stasis in the object. Queer archives insist on objects' fluidity. Preservation is not a consideration. Destruction, which is a kind of transformation, is both preferable and necessary at either the level of our perception of the object, or in the destruction of the material object itself.

Rather than going to the archive for answers to predetermined questions, the queer archive provokes questions, destabilizes what is thought to be known, and discourages the visitor from leaving with a comfortable sense of *being*. Where the modernist LGBT archive constructs and affirms identity, the queer archive encourages a constant reimagining of the many ways one can exist in relationship to the world around them, and thus the engagement with the queer archive is always a personal one.

The work of a queer archive does not solely rest with the archivist. Just as Smith began his performances with various kinds of participation, the queer archive requires willing participants. Also like Smith's work, "getting it" or even liking the work is not required, nor should it even be a concern. However, a willingness to engage is needed. The queer archive resists the kinds of classification and structure found at a traditional archive, but at the same time, it should be changing enough and perhaps even strange

enough to resist the imposition of classification from those who visit it. Again, the emphasis here is on posing questions, rather than offering answers.

What might such an archive look like? Much like Smith's junk heap, the archive could be a constantly changing, purposefully organized, ordered chaos. As Smith would alter the appearance and action of his performances and films based on a recognition that the moment needed to change so that ideas wouldn't become static, the queer archive would need a curator/archivist (or many) who would constantly change the order, contents and experience of the space. Far from a "rotating exhibit" of holdings so popular in traditional archives, the intention behind these changes in a queer archive is for the sake of change and challenge, not to offer yet another narrative. I offer such a scenario as a possibility, but a singular practice of queer archiving cannot be described. It should be clear to the reader that queering cannot be prescriptive. It must be responsive. I hope that the cases of the Tretter and the Jack Smith Collections offer some insights into ways such projects already exist in the world. It is possible that queer archives and queer research are not located within formal institutions, as it tends to be such institutions which would benefit the most from a disruption of order, but which resist it the most.

Not every archive can be a queer archive, but every archive – regardless of how it is ordered and what it contains – can be approached in a queer way, by the archivist and the visitor alike. If an archive is approached with a kind of openness and questioning that recognizes and challenges the imposed order found there, then any collection of objects have the power to provoke new ways of thinking and imagining the world in which we live.

Conclusion

Tracing the Archival Threads

> "So now then we begin again this history of us..."
> - Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans*

Beyond the Closet has, I hope, addressed some of the ways LGBT identity has been produced, shaped, molded, and circulated through the archive, as well as offered some ways of thinking about how the archival form can help reimagine structures and practices of identity. In addition to discussing some of the practical approaches and challenges to archival practices, I have tried to show the ways in which failure and the impossibility of fully capturing any historical moment or cultural experience can reveal observable moments of the formation of identity in the moment of its production.

To understand the archive as a practice is to understand it through the lens of performance. It is about engagement and encounter, discipline and excess, the illusion of narrative with the possibility of the unexpected at any moment. My investigation provokes several questions that remain. Should material only ever be archived if an archivist can perceive a research project that might use them? How can an archivist account for research projects that are, as yet, unimaginable? Can there be value in disorder? How can the decisions about what is kept or discarded (or what is even acquired in the first place) be made visible? In what ways can it be possible to think of the archive outside of the Rankean model? To embrace the queerness of collecting? Is it possible to archive for a queer future as well as an LGBT past?

Even the largest of institutional archives can be intimate places; places where people can come to mark their identities in relation to the material that has been collected and organized there; places where the private thoughts, actions, and desires never publicly expressed by some during their life find a kind of semi-public visibility; places where the hopes and ambitions of previous generations are documented and potentially become inspiration for new movements in the future; places where meaningful relationships can be formed between people, objects, and people with objects. Far from a purely utopic or disciplinary place, the archive is, rather, a subjunctive place – a place of possibility that is neither good or bad, but full of potential.

Each of the sites that I explored in these pages have offered different ways of thinking about archives and sexual identity, and each archive comes with its own politics of archival practice and protocols of public engagement. The founders of the ONE Institute and early archive sought to "reveal" suppressed homophile content within every major academic discipline, as part of the larger homophile movement's efforts to fit into dominant heterosexual culture. The homophile could only be understood within the established frameworks of academic and archival practices. In defining the terms and the scope of their research in this manner, ONE established the language and limitations that continue to direct a substantial amount of research in sexuality studies even today.

The collective behind the Lesbian Herstory Archives radically reconceived the function and organization of an archive. Rather than being /an institution for academic research, they created a home-space where lesbians from the community could come during their evenings and lunch breaks to learn about themselves in the context of lesbian

herstory and culture, and attempted to model this structure for a decentralized network of similar regional archives. However, while subverting some of the troubling patriarchal practices of the institutional archives imagined by organizations like ONE, they continued many of those practices within the less visible rules imposed through seemingly innocuous acts of hospitality. By limiting participation in the archive's management to lesbians, but being unable to achieve consensus on who can be considered a lesbian, the LHA's home-space can be just as restrictive and limiting as the institutional archives they fought against. However, despite their challenges in continuing new acquisitions and appealing to younger generations, their preservation of so much radical 1970s political material offers the possibility of a queer renaissance by inspiring new political possibilities in the imaginations of today's activists.

Jean Tretter originally created his collection in response to the antagonisms of the University of Minnesota, which insisted that gays and lesbians did not constitute a social identity and therefore did not have a history or culture. Without a system of inclusion or exclusion to dictate *what* he collected, Tretter created a system of attachment where everything had value. When the academy began to change its understanding of the culture of sexual identity and the University of Minnesota acquired the Tretter Collection, Tretter continued his grassroots, all-inclusive acquisitions strategy. To engage with the Tretter Collection meant to engage directly with Jean, who alone had the best – though not an infallibly complete – understanding of what was in the archive and its connection to LGBT culture. In its abundance, and through Tretter's inability to make the archive 'useful' in a way that the university expected, the archive became a powerful landscape

where the fortunate few who could go down into the storage rooms could encounter the unexpected in queer and productive ways.

Jack Smith's queer performance practices attempted to challenge stable, singular notions of sexual identity and inspire other ways of thinking about the self in relation to the world. His commitment to this practice and his use of junk has proven a challenge to the art gallery that holds his collection and the archive that hopes to receive the materials with "research value." Collections like Smith's require a radically different approach to thinking about the archive and its stabilizing gestures. In theorizing a queer archival practice, I envision a deeply personal engagement with a curated collection of objects and space that evoke confusion and disorientation as a means to become more critically aware of social habitus. In the process of becoming oriented again, it is possible to imagine alternative approaches to social and political challenges and potentially reframe once static notions of identity. If, as Michel de Certeau argues, identity freezes the gesture of thinking, a queer archive can provide a thaw that encourages movement once again.

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